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PCZONE

ISSUE 159 OCTOBER 2005



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ELF SCARE!

DUNGEON SIEGE 2

GIANT 5-PAGE EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

BEWARE HUMANS!

THE RPG FROM THE END OF THE WORLD

ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION



Techno-wise I am an arse!

DOMINIK DIAMOND JOINS PCZONE



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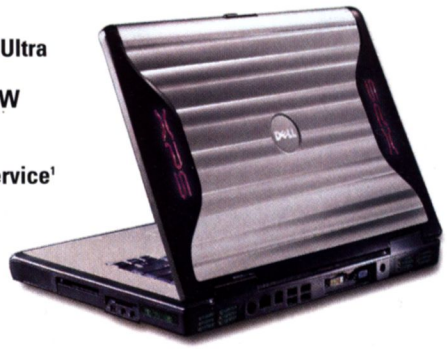
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COVER STORY

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Deathmatch exclusive! Why id's shooter will blow you away!

DOMINIK DIAMOND'S HERE! 146

My new PC arrived weeks ago and I'm still terrified to open it. Because techno-wise I am an arse. An impatient buffoon. A twat



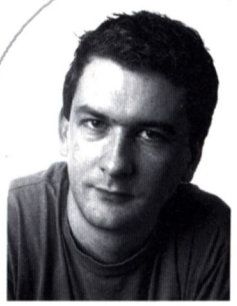
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Elder Scrolls IV



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Dungeon Siege II



DAVE WHO?

DID YOU SEE the new series of *Doctor Who*? Brilliant, wasn't it? They took something the nation loved, revamped it, added the best writers money can buy, some flashy special effects and delivered what's been quoted in *The Guardian* (by ex-*ZONER* Charlie Brooker no-less) as, 'The best family drama series. Ever.'

It gave us an idea. So we took *PC ZONE*, made it even funnier, even more useful and added our very own special effects, and we've produced what's been called, 'The best PC games magazine. Ever.'* Exciting isn't it?

"But huh? What? Where?" Now, settle down. This is what we've done. Previews and news? All the same. It's just talk about stuff that you can't buy yet and you can find all of this in the one section, cunningly called Upfront. The other big addition to the magazine is Freeplay. If you're dead tight you'll never have to buy another game ever again. Oh, and Dominik Diamond's joined us! He's being generally offensive on our back page every month.

It's been an exhausting process. And just like *Doctor Who*, I had to look into the heart of *PC ZONE* to complete the process. And no-one can survive that. So I'm now regenerating. I'm hoping I come back as a Brad Pitt-a-like, but knowing my luck I'll end up looking a bit like Chris Kamara.

I hope you love the redesign as much as we do. And thanks for joining me on the ride.



Dave Woods, ex-editor

*Quote not provided by *The Guardian*



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BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG!

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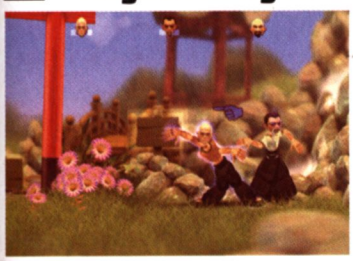


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Too busy? *PC ZONE* in 44 words...
Valve's puppet kung fu and scares with *F.E.A.R.* and *Quake 4*. *POP* bloke talking, Steve Hill sniping and swearing, and it's Montana vs Corleone. Molyneux's giant monkey. Beardies will love *Elder Scrolls IV* and *Dungeon Siege II*. Freeplay bargains, Gilbert's grog and Dominik's diamonds.

Even the old duffer at the gun club tells a story of shooting an Egyptian policeman in the head

STEVE HILL'S REALITY CHECK 42





103 FREEPLAY
The best things in life really are free!

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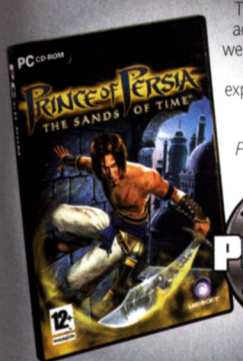
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This is a classic action-adventure game which we described as "a near-seemless gaming experience... Ubisoft has kissed a frog and it's turned into a prince". *PC ZONE* verdict 84%

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UPFRONT

MEET THE TEAM

You'll never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy



JAMIE SEFTON
EDITOR
AGE 35 and counting
LIKES Football, hardcore porn
DISLIKES Meat and nuts
FANCIES Natasha Kaplinsky
FAVOURITE GAME *Pro Evo*
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
Quake 4 multiplayer, *PES5*

Woods has finally left the *ZONE* building, so Sefton has taken on the mantle as editor of the UK's finest PC gaming rag. As part of his new regime, the once-famous *Emmerdale* star (Solicitor Ryan, Episode No. 1,2283) is enforcing strict discipline throughout the mag azine. Will has been forced to give up Peperami and instead eat fruit and veg; Suzy has had to stop swearing; and Prezzer has had to doff his hat every time he even casually looks towards the angry Yorkshireman. However, he's also revealed a softer, more generous side, buying the whole team a pint of beer at the local pub. To share.



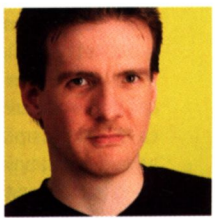
SUZY WALLACE
Disc Editor
Suze knows more about cars, fighting games and blokey things than the rest of the team combined. She can usually be found in *Guild Wars* or in a car. Either way, there'll be a lot of swearing involved.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
Guild Wars, Battlefield 2



DOMINIK DIAMOND
Columnist
Back page newbie Dominik is a far better sort than you or I. He eats gold and owns huge tracts of land in rural Scotland. He'll also appear on *any* TV-clip show pretending he knows things.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
Which button do I press?



PAUL PRESLEY
Section Editor
...(cont. from page 377) with which both melons were consumed and the King's celebrations were able to pass off quietly. It was around this time that MI5 took interest in (cont. page 681)...
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
***Fahrenheit, Half-Life 2* (still)**



PHILIP WAND
Hardware Guru
Little is known about Essex charmer Wandy – beyond, at least, the fact that has a swish car and often puts his hands in his pockets. In fact, we only recently found out he has a corporeal form.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
Live For Speed, BF1942



WILL PORTER
News Editor
Non-award-winning journalist Will has been printed in the *Times* and taped for Radio 4's *Today* programme. He was also on *Farming Today* in 1986, feeding a lamb and wearing red boots.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
GTA: San Andreas* and *Myst V



STEVE HILL
Freelancer and cad
This month, Steve has been to California and Ascalon City (in *Guild Wars*). He describes both as 'alright'. He bathes every night in piles of free games and hates the general public.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
Football Manager, Guild Wars

STUFF THAT'S HELPED US THIS MONTH... Dancing naked ladies, bear-hugs and a dangerously high caffeine intake
STUFF THAT'S BEEN OF NO HELP WHATSOEVER... Noisy air conditioning units, Suzy's self-destructing PC and shots at The Cro-Bar

STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

FANCYING SUZE	10 Mins	How both Dexter Fletcher and Dominik Diamond have now expressed an interest
QUAKE 4 MULTIPLAYER	30 Mins	Why we love it so much
THE SEX LIFE OF BEES	2 Mins	Because it was a fairly strange day
BABYLON 5	15 Mins	Whether or not we should buy the box-sets
TRAMPS	37 Min	And how freelancer Steve O'Hagan doesn't look like one anymore
FIGHTING FANTASY BOOKS	111 Mins	And how great they were. And how Will's mum sold all his at a car boot
FAR CRY	67 Mins	How much we hate people who don't recognise how bloody brilliant it is
ESCAPED MONKEY	23 Mins	And his work experience whore-mongering
SWEATY EARS	15 Mins	The perils of hot weather on Wallace's lugs
DAVE WOODS	413 Mins	How everything is all his fault. Bloody Woods

WIN! **TINY COMPO** Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: Tiny Compo (159), *PC ZONE*, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP. The first correct entry plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. Closing date: September 14, 2005. Which coincidentally is our production editor's birthday. The winner of the last Tiny Compo (157) was one Paul Godden from London; he gets a few nice games for his troubles. Yippee!

GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. Phew!

LETTERS

Jamie Sefton **gallantly rips open the *PC ZONE* mailbox...**





TELL US A STORY

When I was tidying up my old games the other day, I stumbled across *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*. I thought "what the hell" and played it again – what a game! OK, so the graphics might be a bit dated, and the sound is practically non-existent, but it's still a superb title. If game designers nowadays would spend less time on graphics and more on the story and quality of gameplay, they would make more classics like this. Being only 15, I can't afford to keep buying new graphics cards to keep up with technology advances, but anyway, often the best thing about new titles is the visuals.
David Greatorex

We also LOVE the old *Monkey Island* games, recently voting the insult sword fighting as our favourite PC gaming moment ever. You can also check out our exclusive interview with the creator, Ron Gilbert, on page 142. I'd agree that the literary standard of some game storylines are piss poor (*Pariah*), but I think there are positive signs that developers are taking atmosphere, plot and character more seriously – *GTA: San Andreas*, *Fahrenheit* and *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* are three good examples. Anyway, you're 15 for goodness sake – leave the world-weary cynicism until you're at least 18...

HILL ON THE BRAIN

What's going on with all these smut-em-ups such as *Virtually Jenna*? Who's buying them – *looks around suspiciously through slanted lids*. Whoever you are, stop it immediately. It's gotten so I can't have sex again, possibly ever, without seeing Steve Hill's startled little face peering up at me from anywhere I really want to look. It's just not right!
Bob McVie


STEVE HILL: enough to put anyone off sex

Yes, unfortunately using Steve Hill's face to cover up the rude bits in naughty games has caused this bizarre and worrying side-effect in many people – including the *ZONE* team. But think of the alternatives – we could use Prezzer? Will? Me? Gawd. Sorry Bob, you're going to have to get used to it. In a few months' time you may actually start to rather enjoy it...

TRAILER TRASH

I'm surprised that nobody has written in about this already, but considering you guys have just covered E3 (and no doubt watched many trailers for games), I'm not surprised. I have some reservations about *Half-Life 2* and the way that preview movies mislead gamers. *Half-Life 2* is a great game, but have you noticed how some of the preview movies don't quite match up to the released game? For example, what happened to the water tentacle? Or how about the bit when the soldier kicks in the door? If my memory serves me, the same movie included a section where Dr Freeman throws a grenade under a container, which then crushes the soldiers below. These things weren't, however, in the game I played through. Call me cynical if you want, but I get the impression that Valve may have been slightly dishonest with the gaming experience it was trying to promote. Don't get me wrong, I



You need a good graphics card. We need letters. (Good ones, mind, not rubbish ones like '*PC ZONE* rulez, can I have a graphics card please?')

Well serendipity now! The two needs have collided, right here, right now. Write us a letter today. If it wins Letter of the Month we'll send you a prize tomorrow.

Letter of the Month

Hear me moan

Turning over the page from last month's Indie Zone (great section – some of the best games out there are from indie producers), I came across an ad offering me 'Instant Climax' and 'Naughty Girls', all just a phone call away. To clarify, I didn't literally 'come' across the ad, but I did nearly blow my top in another sense, as this kind of second-rate smut is not what I expect to see in the *ZONE*, surely? I mean, what does it say about us *PC ZONE* readers? Are you suggesting that I'm a bedroom-bound, net-surfing geek whose only sexual relationships are those with destitute hags reduced to manning phone-sex lines for a living? OK, you have me on that one, but it's not as if I want my nose rubbed in it. My point being, could you please desist from publishing such tawdry commercials – I get all that I need from my *Reader's Wives* subscription.
Jakster



We've had a barrage of letters and emails from readers about the depraved phone sex ads in last month's *ZONE*. All I can say is that it wasn't supposed to happen, and the advertising executive in charge has been soundly whipped. However, for those of you actually praising *PC ZONE* for enriching their sexual experiences, we've included a few of our own mucky classified ads for your satisfaction. Have a graphics card, sir.

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SAY WHAT?

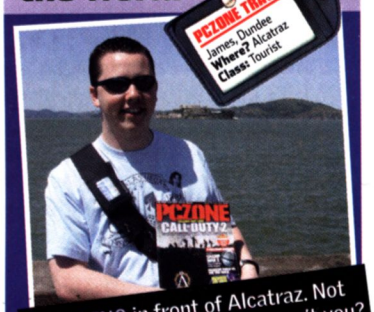
You're taking orders from your platoon leader, but soon enough you'll have men under your command
Jamie Anderson

respect Valve a lot because it has made a couple of stunning games and forced the rest of the industry to take notice, but I can't help feeling a bit let down.
Craig Rendall

Movies do this quite often – the *LOTR: Return Of The King* trailer had Gandalf facing-off against the Witch King, which was cut from the cinema release. With Valve, you could argue that the multiple trailers were showing off the Source engine as much as the game, but as with movies, scenes or set pieces are often cut from a completed game simply because of time. You never know, Valve might be saving those bits for the forthcoming expansion *Half-Life 2: Aftermath*.


MISSING SCENES: ever feel like you're not getting the full picture?

PCZONE Around the World



STANDING in front of Alcatraz. Not bad, but you can do better, can't you?

We want photos of you with *PC ZONE* in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

PIMP MY RIG

After watching a lot of MTV lately, instead of getting a summer job, I have come up with a brilliant idea. A television show entitled "Pimp My Rig" in which poor, unfortunate, low-end PC gamers with Celeron processors bring in their computer to be pimped with phat processors, bitchin' graphics cards, liquid cooling systems and as much RAM as can be crammed into the case. Either that, or it could be a new feature of your awesome magazine. If so, you'd be obliged to do up my PC first – I want to run *Battlefield 2* on full settings!
Robert

I doubt whether "Pimp My Rig" on TV would have people switching over from *The Sopranos*, but as a feature it's definitely something we could consider for Wandy's hardware section. In the meantime, just don't attempt to super-cool your PC like the poor sod did on page 97.

COMPUTER LOVE

In a rare moment of contemplation (which included a brief period of chin-stroking), I realised that computers are much like friends, in the sense that they have provided me with so many emotions in my gaming lifetime: Ecstasy – finally getting my hands on *Half-Life 2* after years of nail-biting. Fear – creeping through the flickering shadows of *Doom 3*, flashlight shaking and arse-cheeks clenched knowing something is watching

I can definitely state that I'm a devoted reader of *PC ZONE*, and am neither middle-aged, balding, overweight or sex-obsessed – being a teenager in college trying to pass my A2 levels and get into the military does not allow for any such things.
CK-iller

I was bitterly disappointed with the *Guild Wars* packaging design. The game continues the long tradition of bearded role-playing, and I for one was looking forward to a picture of some heavily bearded dwarf with a two-handed mace and cheese in his hair.
madameye

Am I the only one who hasn't been mortally offended by the last issue's half page sex ad of girls asking me to listen to them? Girls want me to listen to them all the time, most of the time without needing my credit card details.
escaped_monkey

Join the forum fun at www.pczone.co.uk

MY IRON JUNG

For three years *ZONE* staff members have worked to craft renowned creator of Analytical Psychology, Dr Carl Jung (1875-1961), out of metal. A fount of knowledge, fed with gaming data from past and present, he exists for your enlightenment...


Send your gaming questions and queries to drjung@pczone.co.uk

DEAR DR JUNG

Q So whatever happened to the sequel to *Toonstruck*?
Yours, DeadMartyr

A ***Bzzt* *Bzzt* Well Mr Martyr, the highly acclaimed point-and-click adventure *Toonstruck* (1996), starring an individual named Christopher Lloyd, told us much about the human psyche. *Bzzt* The now defunct Virgin Interactive had the game cut in half a few months before the beta version was due to be released, claiming that the overspill would appear in the sequel. It never would, and indeed never will. A ludicrous budget of $8 million, coupled with poor sales and a struggling publisher saw off the franchise in a stroke. *Bzzt* But wait, what's going on? Where am I?**

DEAR DR JUNG

Q What the hell is going on with *BloodRayne 2*? *PCZ* reviewed it ages ago and I still haven't got my goth-babe fix. WTF?!
Yours, ZEROevil

A ***Bzzt* WTF indeed young Mr Evil. And you can include *Advent Rising* in your musing, since both are US releases yet to appear on this side of the *Bzzt* pond. My sources have probed VU Games, the distributor of said gaming experiences for the American publishers Majesco, and received little more than a 'no comment'. As a trained *Bzzt* professional in the art of psychiatry I sense some tension here, and perhaps a little longer to wait. *Bzzt* I feel curiously cold. My hands seem heavier than they once were. *Bzzt* Why is it so cold?**

LETTERS



@ letters@pczone.co.uk
✉ letters, pc zone, future publishing, 99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp



BATTLEFIELD 2 might give you a warm feeling inside, but your processor won't thank you

me from the corner (similar to a recent night out in Manchester, actually). And Despair – booting up *Battlefield 2*, only to watch smoke pour from my computer's innards as I overestimate its power for the last time. Oh, and by the way, I'm not suggesting that computers should replace friends. If I had to choose between them, the answer is obvious, but it is nice to have the option. Just, er, don't tell my girlfriend.
Martin Young

I absolutely agree – your PC can elicit many emotional highs and lows, from the utter joy of completing *Far Cry*, to the anger of not being able to install Steam. However, many of my big emotional gaming experiences recently have involved playing with real human beings, such as (have I mentioned this already?) when I recently trashed Dave Woods in the office *PES4* final. I reckon it's dangerous to rely on a PC as your only emotional outlet, especially with a new Windows OS on the way to unleash all-new levels of frustration and horror.

A LARA MONEY

I bought *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness* for £2.99 the other day, and I still feel f***ing done.
Paul McCarthy

Poor old Paul. You have indeed bought a bit of a stinker. If it's any consolation, you'll probably get £3 for it if you trade it in for the next Lara Croft adventure *Tomb Raider: Legend*, which is promising to be very good.

ONLINE GAMBLE

I'm a little surprised that there is an *Online Gambler* magazine free with most copies of *PC ZONE*. I also noticed the very small "intended for over-18s only" disclaimer under the very large FREE EVERY MONTH headline. I'm not sure at which demographic group you try to aim *PC ZONE*, but when I collect my copy each month, I invariably see children buying your magazine. A few may even think that gambling could make them money. Please don't think that I'm on an anti-gambling crusade, I've bet with the best of them in Las Vegas and don't think there's anything wrong with sensible betting, so long as you know that you won't win in the long term. That's why casinos make so much money – they win, you lose! I know that *PC ZONE* gets money from advertising, but your policy is really not ethical is it?
Mike Tomlinson

Now come on Mike. What's less ethical – giving children the opportunity to learn at an early age how to fake a good hand in *Texas Hold 'em*, or waiting until they're 18, when they're probably too old to develop decent card-counting skills? I guess you're not going to like our planned giveaway of *PC ZONE* branded cigarettes either? Sheesh, there's no pleasing some people.



IT'S LARA, but not as we know and love her

IDIOT'S CORNER

Real calls from real idiots...

PCZONE
Hello, *PC ZONE*?

IDIOT
My disc doesn't work.

PCZONE
Have you tried Technical Support?

IDIOT
Yes, no-one's there.

PCZONE
Oh, really? We just spoke to them.

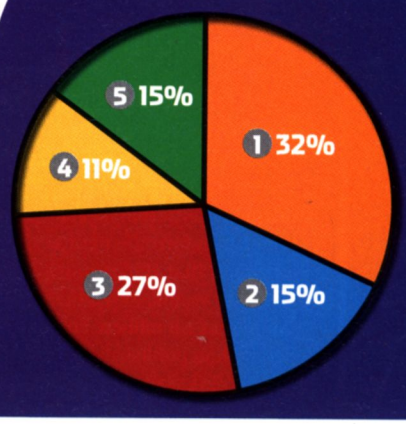
IDIOT
I want compensation.

PCZONE
We're not liable, I'm afraid.

IDIOT
Typical. In the end you'll be the seeds of your own destruction. (phone clicks off).

The Big Question

Biggest problem caused by the faulty *Battlefield 2* patch?

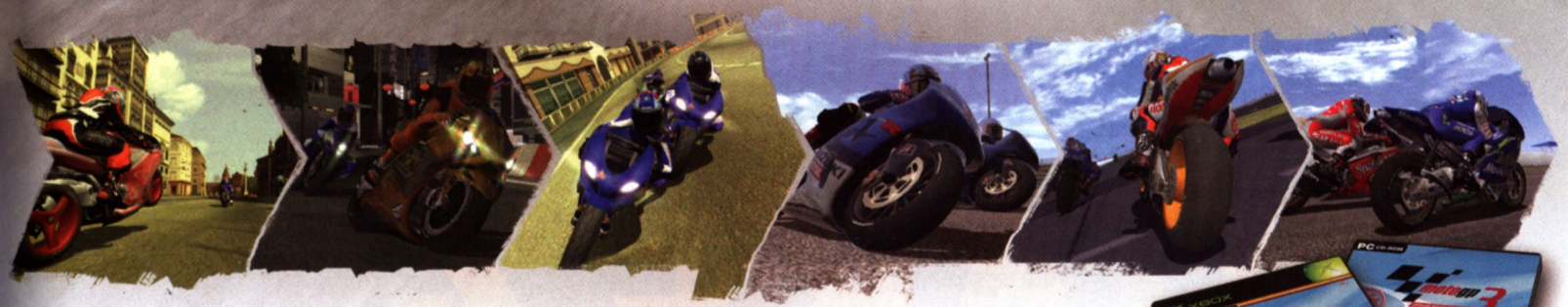


1. Three-month waiting list for treatment by medics: 32%
2. Parachutes opening inside out, players flying into space: 15%
3. Bots teaming up to slaughter mankind: 27%
4. Constantly shifting Axis Of Evil causing random team swapping: 11%
5. Futility of war highlighted by randomly appearing hippies: 15%



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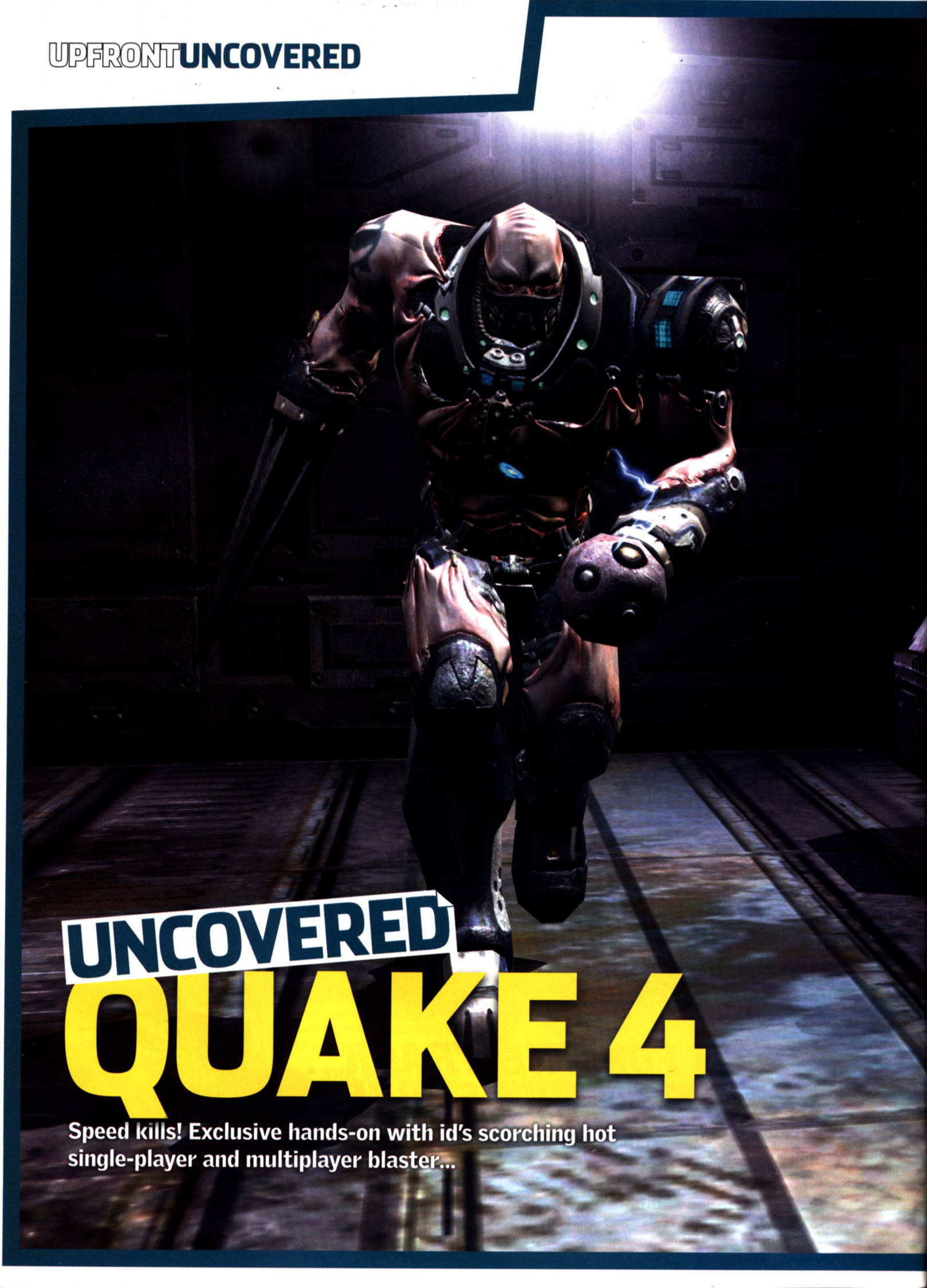
POWERED BY gamespy

BT

CLIMAX

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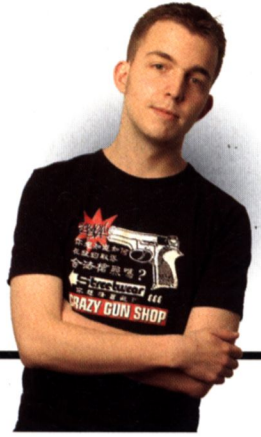
UNCOVERED
QUAKE 4

Speed kills! Exclusive hands-on with id's scorching hot single-player and multiplayer blaster...



Rejoice! The most important *Quake 4* question has been answered – multiplayer is fast. Very fast. In fact, the latest deathmatch and CTF maps we played are *exactly* what you want from a *Quake* sequel. Exhilarating, ultra-violent and hilarious. Raven and id are sticking to their promises, giving us the classic single-player experience of *Quake II* combined with the addictive multiplayer fragging of *Quake III*. Think muchos speed along with the return of jump pads, quad-damage, rail-guns, nail-guns, teleports and so much more. *Will Porter* is your esteemed guide...

PAGE 22



UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

NEWS EDITOR Will Porter

Something Changed

WELL HERE IT IS, the new *PC ZONE*. Guaranteed to improve your computer game related bog-read experience by at least 20 per cent. You're not an idiot, so I won't waffle on and on about how hard we've worked (which we have) or how proud I am to be a part of what is a pretty decisive nip, tuck and regrouting of the good ship *ZONE* (that much is obvious).

What I will say, however, is how much I've been fundamentally stiffed by the whole shebang. Combine news and previews you say? Double my work-load? Turn it all into some sort of feature-led hippy-fest, where lists of level settings and gun types won't cut it any more? Avoid covering crap German RTS games at (almost) all costs? What else do you want? Blood? My battered, poorly-paid body on a pigging spike?

I mean... Honestly. If there were some sort of national trade union that journalists could join then I'd be banging on their door right now (*Nobody... Make... A... Sound – Ed*). Right now! I mean, it's fine for you, you've just got a significantly better product for exactly the same price. It's like buying a pack of Shredded Wheat for the normal shelf price and discovering that overnight it's become 200 per cent more likely to help you avoid dying a terrible, early death from a cardiac arrest. But not for muggins here. Oh no. Fingers to the bone, fingers to the bone...

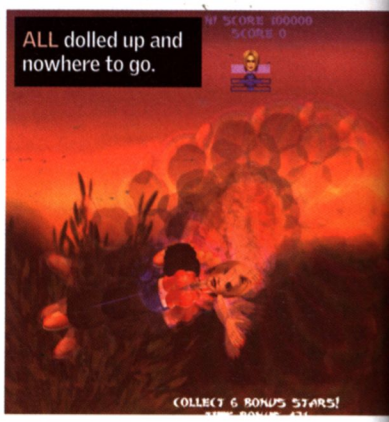
I'm joking of course – no honestly, I am. I liked making the magazine better really. *PC ZONE*: same old jokes, slightly nicer fonts. Change is good, and therefore we are totally great.

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

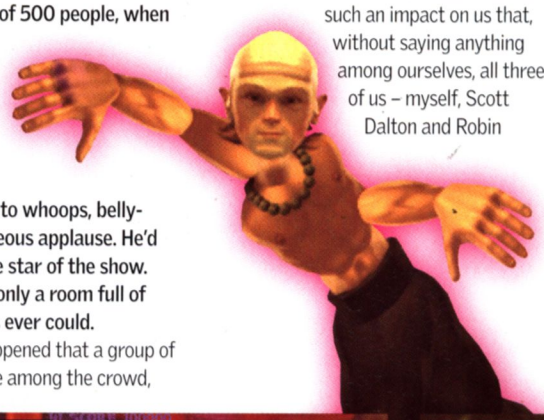
RAGDOLLS TO RICHES

Exclusive! *Ragdoll Kung Fu* snapped up for distribution on Steam!

www.steampowered.com ETA: September



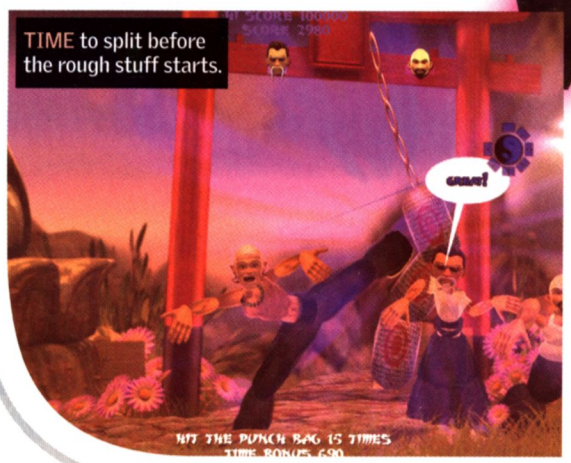
IN A DARKENED theatre at this year's Games Developers Conference a very scared individual, an artist at Lionhead no less, showed off a labour of love. Before an audience of 500 people, when he was expecting around 20, an amazed Marcos Healey showed off *Ragdoll Kung Fu* and watched his audience descend into whoops, belly-laughs and spontaneous applause. He'd accidentally become star of the show. They loved him like only a room full of hollering Americans ever could.



Now it just so happened that a group of men from Valve were among the crowd, which is where Doug Wood, esteemed *Half-Life* animator, picks up the story. "The response was amazing," he explains. "By the end it was a standing ovation. It had such an impact on us that, without saying anything among ourselves, all three of us – myself, Scott Dalton and Robin Walker – immediately proceeded to approach Healey as he was packing up. Everyone unanimously and simultaneously agreed to pounce on this guy."

And so it was that the very next day Healey found himself on a plane to Seattle, bound for a meeting with Gabe Newell, head honcho at Valve. "I'd lost all my credit cards, but they offered to pay for everything – my flight, a hotel and really amazing restaurants," he beamed.

"I turned up to the Valve offices, just me, a copy of my game on my iPod and $20 in my pocket and I prepared my demo. By now I had learned a little more about Gabe Newell and his strange fascination for knives (he has what must be the largest collection in the world), so was feeling a





STOP PRESS!

Diablo 3?

It's been revealed that Blizzard has its *Diablo* team working on a mystery project. Wild speculation claims it's *Diablo 3*. Yes please!

Gun

The western shooter from veteran Tony Hawk designers at NeverSoft, known as *Gun*, is due for a release on PC. Howdy strangers.

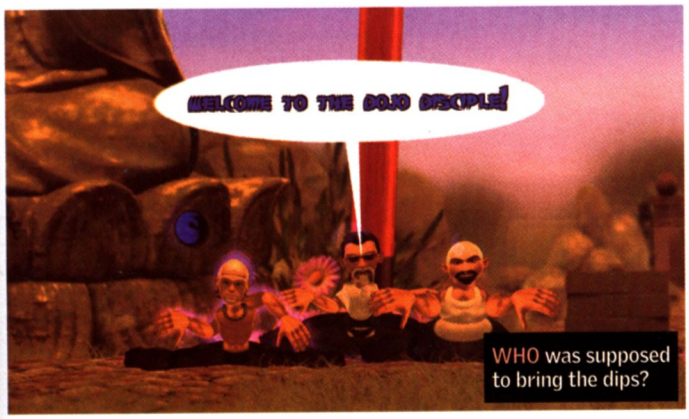
X3: Reunion

Egosoft's magisterial third outing is now coming out in November, as opposed to vague claims it would make its entrance next year.

22 **Quake 4**
Playtest! The return of id's gaming juggernaut is upon us. Does it stand up to the hype?

28 **F.E.A.R.**
Juvenile delinquency doesn't usually end up in the psychic murder of highly trained commandos. But it does now.

52 **Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion**
A game so revolutionary it should be kept under armed guard. Our visit to Bethesda leaves us stunned and amazed.



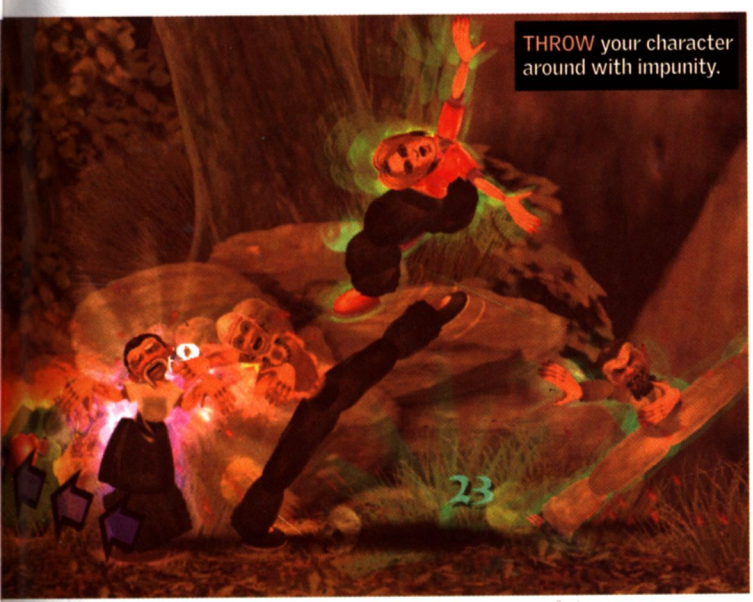
WHO was supposed to bring the dips?

little nervous while waiting for him. He seemed to magically appear somehow, on the sofa that was nicely positioned for viewing the huge screen, so I wandered over, shook his hand and mumbled something about how he must be a ninja. Anyway, I showed him the game's features, during which he remained quiet, but at the end he clapped, stood up, and said, 'OK, should be simple, let's make an offer', which they did!"

And so it came to be that a *Ragdoll Kung Fu* icon will be appearing in your Steam account very shortly – at the time of writing a price has not been finalised, although it will certainly be less than £20 should you want to snap it up. A mouse-driven game in which you move the individual limbs of your kung fu fighters (or football players, or dancers) and hurl them around the screen with impunity, it's a breathtakingly original concept.

"This whole project began as a muck around in the park with a few mates, and a simple sprite game to go with it," explains Healey, referencing the cut-scenes in which his friends get some high exposure. "It was just an excuse to make a game in the way I used to, back in my Commodore 64 days. I never imagined that it would develop in the way it did and lead me to far away lands to meet minted knife-wielding ninjas. Life can be quite exciting!"

ZONE has been a supporter of *Ragdoll Kung Fu* for ages and we're made up that both it and its creator are about to get the exposure they deserve.


THROW your character around with impunity.

Advance Wars

Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter continues to dazzle

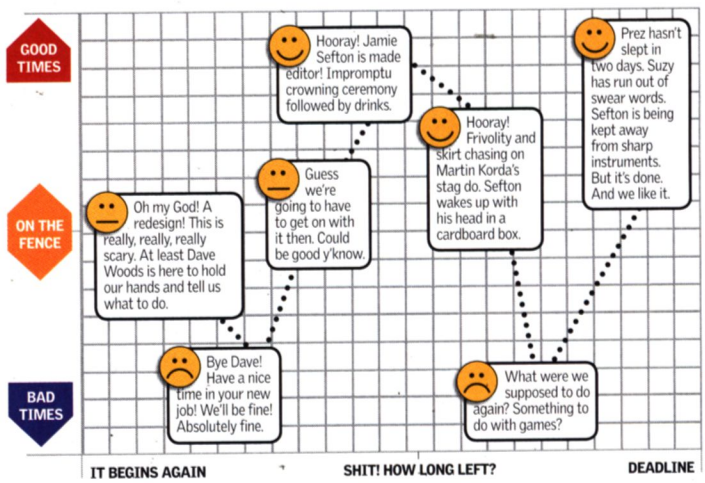
www.ghostrecon.com/uk/ghostrecon3 ETA: Q4

Out of all the over-hyped self-proclaimed titles of the next generation, this is the one that's both having its cake and eating it. Beyond the (wonderfully realistic) grubby graphics there are neat tricks like bodily awareness – seeing your legs, being able to lean in eight directions when aiming and diving and back-sliding when running around in FPS mode. Meanwhile, there are some imaginative uses of graphical effects like smashed HUDs or parasite flickers on your electronic visor if you're caught near an explosion. Seen here, though, are the physics in action – *Warfighter* will have not one, but two physics engines running in the background. One for everyday ragdolls and destruction (all of which will effect the dynamic AI of both squad members and the bad men they shoot), and one for some earth-shattering visual effects.


THIS school run is getting more and more tiresome.

STUFF ***Warhammer* is finally getting the RTS treatment that it's been begging for. Admittedly, we thought that it was looking a bit ropey at E3, but we're ready to be proven wrong since Black Hole (previously responsible for *Armies of Exigo*) knows what it's doing. Plus, playing as the united tribes of Chaos certainly does excite the Games Workshop nerd lying dormant within us.**

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER

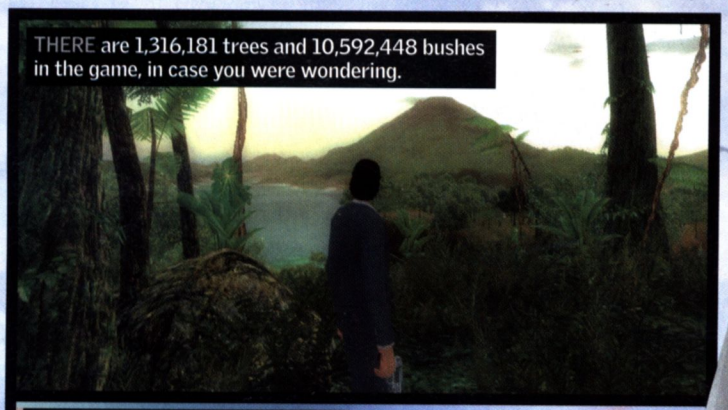


SUN, SEA AND SWEDES...

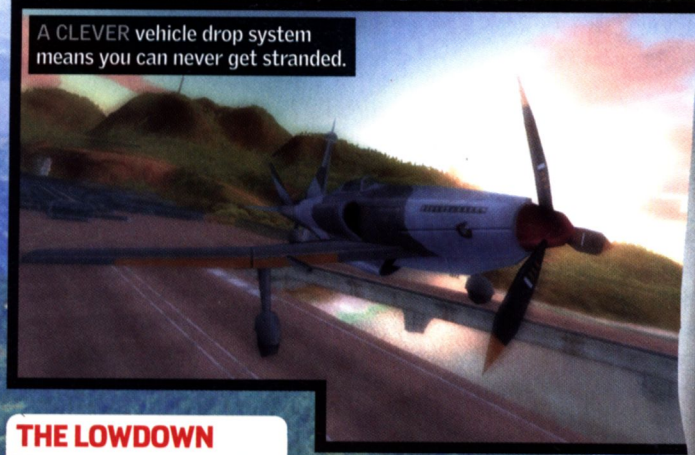
JUST CAUSE

In the jungle, the quiet jungle... *Anthony Holden* drives his car off a cliff and jumps out the window

DEVELOPER Avalanche Studios
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.justcausegame.com
PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 157



THERE are 1,316,181 trees and 10,592,448 bushes in the game, in case you were wondering.



A CLEVER vehicle drop system means you can never get stranded.

THE LOWDOWN

- 1,024 square kilometres of land to explore ✓
- Mixture of story missions and freeform gameplay ✓
- Crazy stunts ✓
- Looks and plays like a console game ✗
- Not much that hasn't been seen in *GTA* & *Boiling Point* ✗

ETA 2006

JUST AS NEWTON and Leibniz discovered the secrets of calculus simultaneously, so it transpires that two European development houses have arrived independently at another great epiphany of the modern age: '*GTA* in the jungle.' This time, there seems little debate over who got there first – Deep Shadows launched the epic, bug-ridden *Boiling Point* several months ago, but Swedish upstart Avalanche Studios is not far behind with its tropical Rockstar homage, *Just Cause*.

The parallels between the two are uncanny. Both offer a huge, go-anywhere world, freeform gameplay and a fictional Latin American setting. Both feature an array of vehicles to pilot, points-based relationship stats with local powers and a fully simulated environment. Stranger still, both are named after crap Hollywood movies of the 1990s. But as Avalanche's lead game designer Magnus Nedfors is quick to point out, they are in fact different games.

SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT

"When I first heard of *Boiling Point* I was scared it would be very similar, but now I've played it I don't think so. There are similarities, but I would say *Boiling Point* is almost an RPG, with all the people you can talk to and the inventory and so on. Our game is much more of an action game. We don't care about the inventory – just grab a weapon and shoot things."

To bring you quickly up to speed, the concept is this. You are agent Rico Rodriguez, an expert in regime change and 'modern-style James Bond guy'. You've been sent to the Caribbean island of San Esperito to overthrow the president and stop the threat of WMDs (or if you can't find those, drugs). How you go about this is, to a certain extent, up to you. There's a rigid storyline, with 20 core missions that can only be played in a fixed order, but outside of this you're free to explore the island, complete bonus missions, nick vehicles, unlock weapons and build relations with the local rebels and drug lords. Even within the missions your actions are relatively uninhibited.

THE STORY SO FAR... AVALANCHE

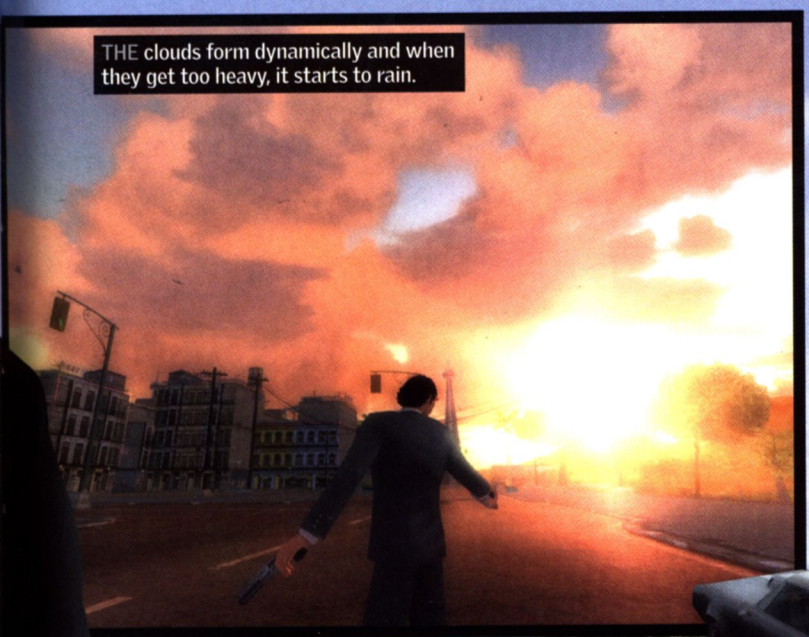
2003 – **The ball is rolling...** Avalanche Studios is formed in Feb 2003 in Stockholm and work begins on *Just Cause*.



2004 – **It's enormous!** After teaming with Eidos, Avalanche swells to 63 staff, including at least two that aren't men!

2005 – **Yum... Tasty** *PC ZONE* visits Stockholm to play the game and sample the excellent local herring.

200? – **Crystal ball...** Avalanche has at least one other project on the go, and is in planning for *Just Cause 2*.



THE clouds form dynamically and when they get too heavy, it starts to rain.

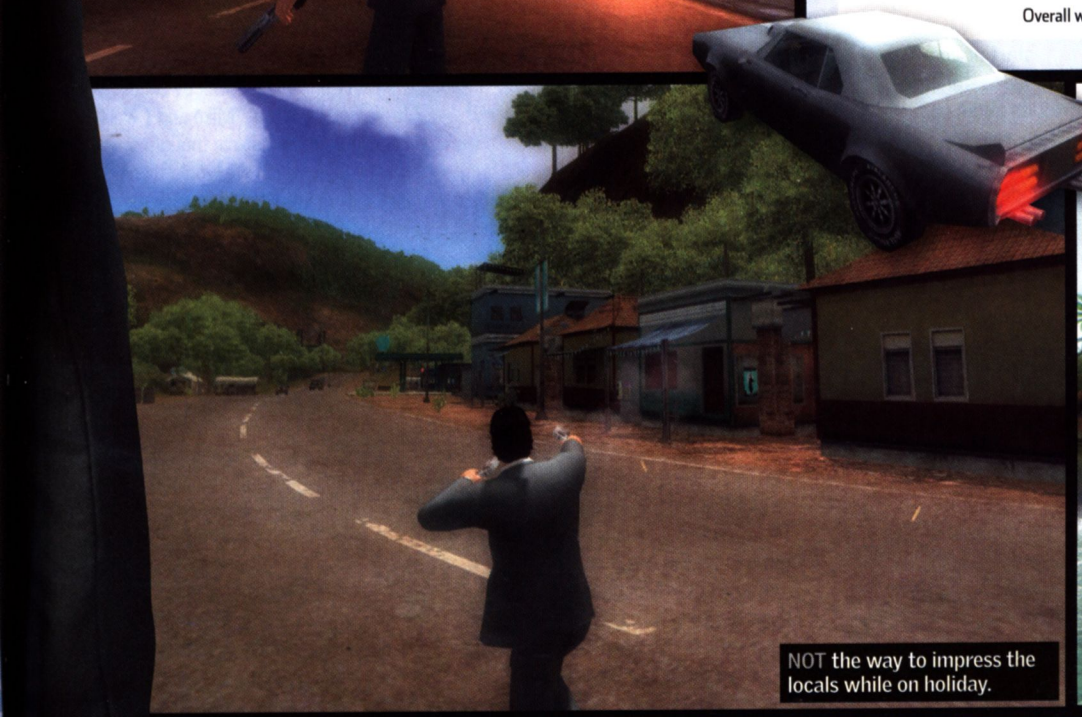
Numbers Game

Just Cause vs *Boiling Point*: the breakdown

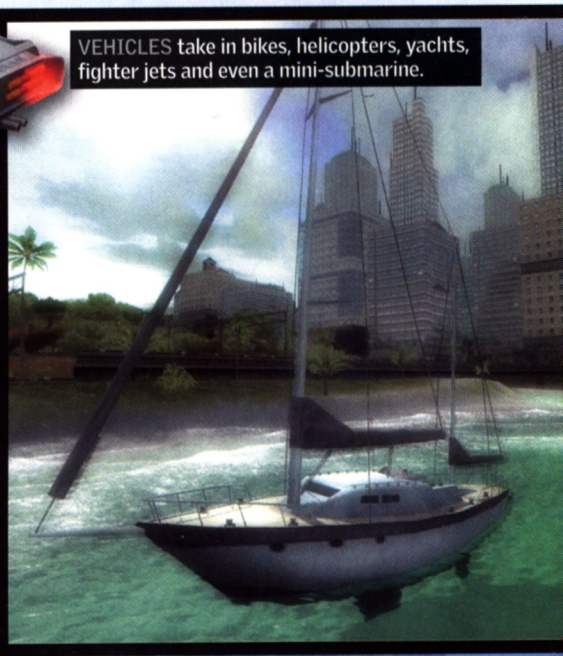
So just how similar are these two titles? As we all know, in games, numbers speak louder than words, so here's how they stack up...

	JUST CAUSE	BOILING POINT	WINNER
Size of world	32x32 km	25x25 km	JC!
Number of vehicles	More than 100	25	JC!
Number of weapons	25	20 (plus upgrades)	draw
Number of trees	1,316,181	Unknown	JC!
Number of factions	3 – Government, guerrillas, drug cartels	6 – Government, guerrillas, drug mafia, bandits, Indians, CIA	BP!
Brothels in volcanoes	1	0	JC!
Marauding jaguars	0	At least 2 or 3	BP!
Bugs	Unknown	Several thousand	BP!

Overall winner: ***Just Cause***! The Swedes take it by a nose. Well done chaps.



NOT the way to impress the locals while on holiday.



VEHICLES take in bikes, helicopters, yachts, fighter jets and even a mini-submarine.

"We provide mission objectives like 'blow up the radar station'," says creative director Christofer Sundberg, "but how you blow it up is completely up to you. You can steal a plane and crash into it, you can drive a car into it. You can place an explosion pack. We encourage players to be creative."

TAKING A DIVE

The game begins with a skydiving sequence, as you plummet toward the golden shores of San Esperito. Already the clock's ticking, as you have to reach the beach in time to save your CIA buddy Sheldon from some angry cops. After a brief and somewhat comical shootout – combat is extremely simplistic – you're treated to a humvee ride back to the nearest safe house, shooting down choppers and jeeps as you go.

While this is a reasonably exciting way to open proceedings, it also introduces you to one of *Just Cause*'s most endearing features – the parachute that Rico can unfurl from his Armani whenever the mood strikes. It may not adhere too closely to the laws of physics, but it is a lot of fun, encouraging you to chuck yourself off cliffs, leap out of planes – even bail out of speeding cars and boats. Better still, if you can guide your 'chute into the vicinity of another moving vehicle – be it a truck, boat or plane – you can land directly on the roof, tear the driver out of his seat and assume control of the craft swiftly.

Clearly, there's no shortage of things to do here. Other than messing around with vehicles and outrageous stunts, you've got 120 side missions to choose from (varying from assassinations to package deliveries), and a load of bonus tasks, which might be anything from rounding up fugitives to winning a speedboat race. It's what the yanks might call 'content rich.'

What worries us is the standard of graphics. Avalanche is very proud of the fact that the game is identical on PS2, Xbox and PC, but for PC owners this is a bit like being told the new wheels for our Porsche are the same as those on a Renault Laguna. Nevertheless, there are some good ideas here and certainly enough to raise an eyebrow or two up at Rockstar North. PCZ

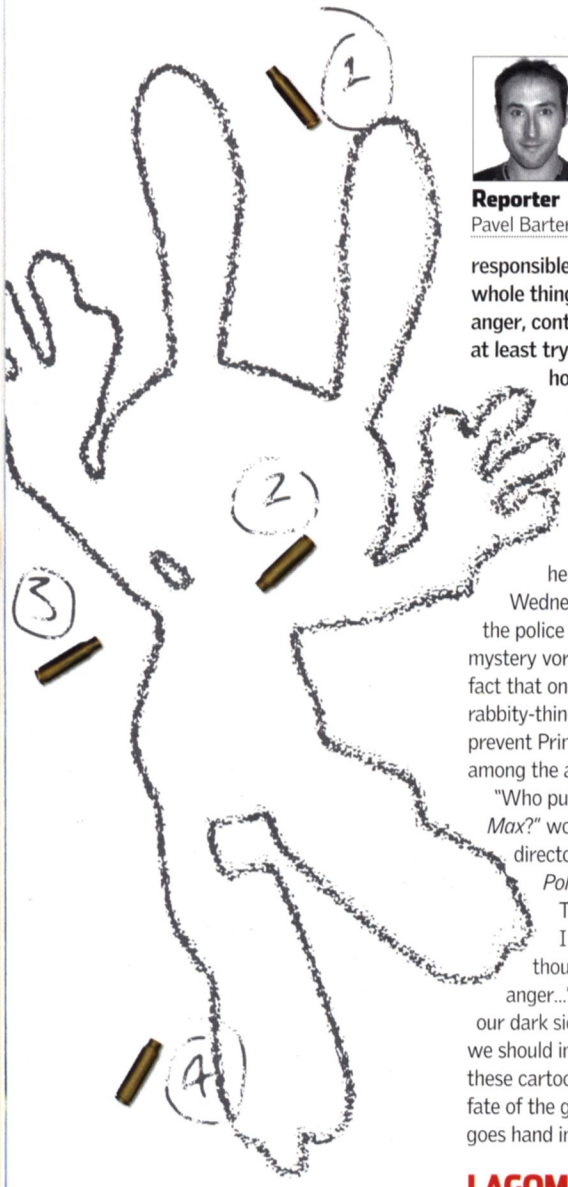
Our game is much more of an action game – just grab yourself a weapon and shoot things

Magnus Nedfors
lead designer, *Just Cause*

WHO KILLED SAM & MAX?



They lived their lives like candles in the wind. But how did Sam & Max meet their end?



Reporter
Pavel Barter

IT'S BEEN OVER a year now. The dust has settled, at least partially, so maybe we should start acting like mature, responsible adults about the whole thing. Suppress the anger, control the vitriol and at least try to understand how and why two speaking animals were taken away from us so abruptly all those months ago.

The reason we're here today is because on Wednesday March 3, 2004 two of the police force's finest stepped into a mystery vortex and vanished. And the fact that one was a 3ft hyperkinetic rabbity-thing, the other a 6ft dog, didn't prevent Princess Di levels of mourning among the adventure game community.

"Who pulled the plug on *Sam & Max?*" wonders Mike Stemmle, lead director of the aborted *Freelance Police*. "Satan? George W. Bush? The Illuminati? Jar Jar Binks? I don't really dwell on that thought because it leads to anger..." Still, never ones to avoid our dark sides, perhaps it's now that we should investigate the demise of these cartoon coppers, and indeed the fate of the graphical adventures that goes hand in hand with them.

LAGOMORPH UNCOVERED

The story begins early in 2001 when Infinite Machine, fronted by *Jedi Knight* designer Justin Chin, began work on a sequel to *Sam & Max Hit The Road*. For years, fans had begged LucasArts to create a follow-up to 1993's point-and-click adventure about two loud-mouthed animals on the trail of a sasquatch called Bruno. The duo were the brainchild of Steve Purcell, who created his first *S&M* comic in 1987 and later drew a strip for LucasArts' quarterly newsletter.



When Infinite Machine went bankrupt in February 2002, the project fluttered back to LucasArts. Mike Stemmle, co-writer of the first game, took the helm. "And it was a good thing, too," he laughs. "Before *Sam & Max* re-entered my life I was working on a Zak McKracken sequel. Imagine how torqued off the Internet would've gotten if LucasArts had cancelled that!" So was the game set to improve upon *Hit The Road*? "Improve? I would've settled for as good as. The first game rocked so hard that people had seizures."

Sam & Max: Freelance Police was to be a classic point-and-click, encompassing six cases intertwined into one large "uber-plot". Insane mini-games included a dance-off and a battle with a rogue artificial intelligence made out of tortilla chips. "Steve and I co-wrote the stories and cut-scenes and had final approval on the dialogue," recalls Mike. "Steve also did a lot of character design, provided copious style sheets for *Sam & Max*, and generally showered wit and wisdom from on high. All that while holding a full-time job at Pixar."

Dan Connors, *Freelance Police* producer, says that "Mike and I would come up with what we thought was a wacky idea, which we would then discuss with Steve who would say, 'That's good, but it should be a little stranger'." And was the development painless? Stemmle nods. "I can honestly say that it was the smoothest project I ever worked on. Of course, nearly every seat was filled by hot-shot game-building veterans, so that probably had something to do with it."



CONE OF TRAGEDY

Then in March 2004, LucasArts delivered a death blow. "After careful evaluation of current marketplace realities and underlying economic considerations, we've decided that this was not the appropriate time to launch a graphic adventure on the PC," it announced. So does Michael Stemmle remember where he was when he heard that the plug had been pulled? "Not really. I've kinda blocked it out, like memories of ritual Satanic abuse."

Although *Sam & Max 2* was 90 per cent complete and only a few months

Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

@ letters@pczone.co.uk
✉ pavel barter, pc zone, 99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp

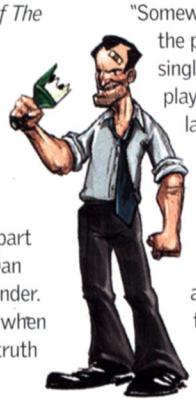


THE *ZONE* crew does its bit at E3 2004.

Well, there's no real conspiracy. It's just big business, pure and simple

from release, the money men feared that packaging and marketing it would add further millions to the budget. LucasArts' time as the greatest adventure game publisher on the globe – creator of titles like *Monkey Island* and *Day Of The Tentacle* – seemed to have suddenly come to an end.

Steve Purcell vented his anger in a press release, calling it a "short-sighted decision." Today, however, there's a certain air of philosophical thinking on the part of those in the design team. Dan Connors, for example, is far kinder. "Of course we were bummed when it was cancelled and there is truth that the current market conditions are difficult for a product like *Sam & Max*."



The fans, however, have yet to run out of venom and bile to spit. An online petition to resurrect *Freelance Police* now exceeds 31,000 signatures and includes poetic gems like, "Give us *Sam & Max* you twats!" and "Stop releasing utter CRAP, go back to your ROOTS!"

Freelance Police's fallout led to Connors and a chunk of the development team splitting to form their own company, Telltale Games (www.telltalegames.com). Steve Purcell is working full-time at Pixar, while Mike Stemmle is still at LucasArts, recently lending his hand to the *Star Wars* games *Knights Of The Old Republic II* and *Republic Commando*.

ASK FOR ANSWERS

So why was *Freelance Police* cancelled? "Somewhere between the initiation of the project and its cancellation, every single European adventure game player died. Of course, I'm just a layman, so it's possible that the subtler market analyses were dumbed down for my consumption," laughs Stemmle.

Ron Gilbert however, creator of *Monkey Island*, reckons it was a sign of wider problems affecting the industry. "Two or three categories of games are all that sell now – sports, shooters – and that's about it. Publishers are so focused on the hardcore gamer that it becomes an ever decreasing circle."

And the culprit behind the game's demise? Well, there's no real conspiracy. It's just big business, pure and simple. And giving a firm 'no comment' to our requests for interviews, LucasArts remains resolutely tight-lipped.

However, this May the company's legal rights to the crime-fighting duo reverted back to their creator, Steve Purcell. Will he decide to resurrect the departed dog and bunny? It's anyone's guess, but rest assured that we haven't heard the last of this dynamic duo. PCZ

Re-animators

German publisher Bad Brain Entertainment on its attempts to resurrect *Freelance Police* in late 2004.

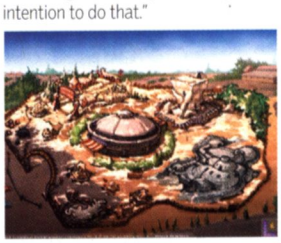


"QUICK man! Over there! An open grave!"

How did negotiations between Bad Brain and LucasArts come about?
Dr Wolfgang Kierdorf: "I thought, 'Hey! Why not ask [LucasArts] for all its point-and-click adventure licenses.' After a while I was asked to make an official offer and a detailed plan on how to continue *Sam & Max 2*."

Did you come close to securing a deal?
"All the time that I was talking to LucasArts I was pretty sure this was going somewhere. Then some weeks later, all of a sudden I got an email saying something like: 'Thanks for the offer, but NO'."

Why do you think LucasArts decided to bury the game in its vaults rather than sell it off?
"I don't know, I really don't. I would have really loved to do the game. I am just sorry that so many fans got burned again. It really wasn't my intention to do that."





TRIANGULAR heads are all the rage on Stroggos.

READY THE RAIL-GUN...

QUAKE 4

Whether fighting for frags or the survival of the human race, *Will Porter* has his *Quake* and eats it

DEVELOPER id Software/Raven **PUBLISHER** Activision **WEBSITE** www.idsoftware.com **PREVIOUSLY IN...** Issue 156

THE LOWDOWN

- The essential deathmatch experience returns ✓
- High-octane single-player campaign on Stroggos ✓
- Squad battling, hovertanks and big stompy walkers ✓
- Open-air sections as well as dank corridors ✓
- Not quite as exciting if you didn't like *Doom 3* ✗

ETA Winter '05

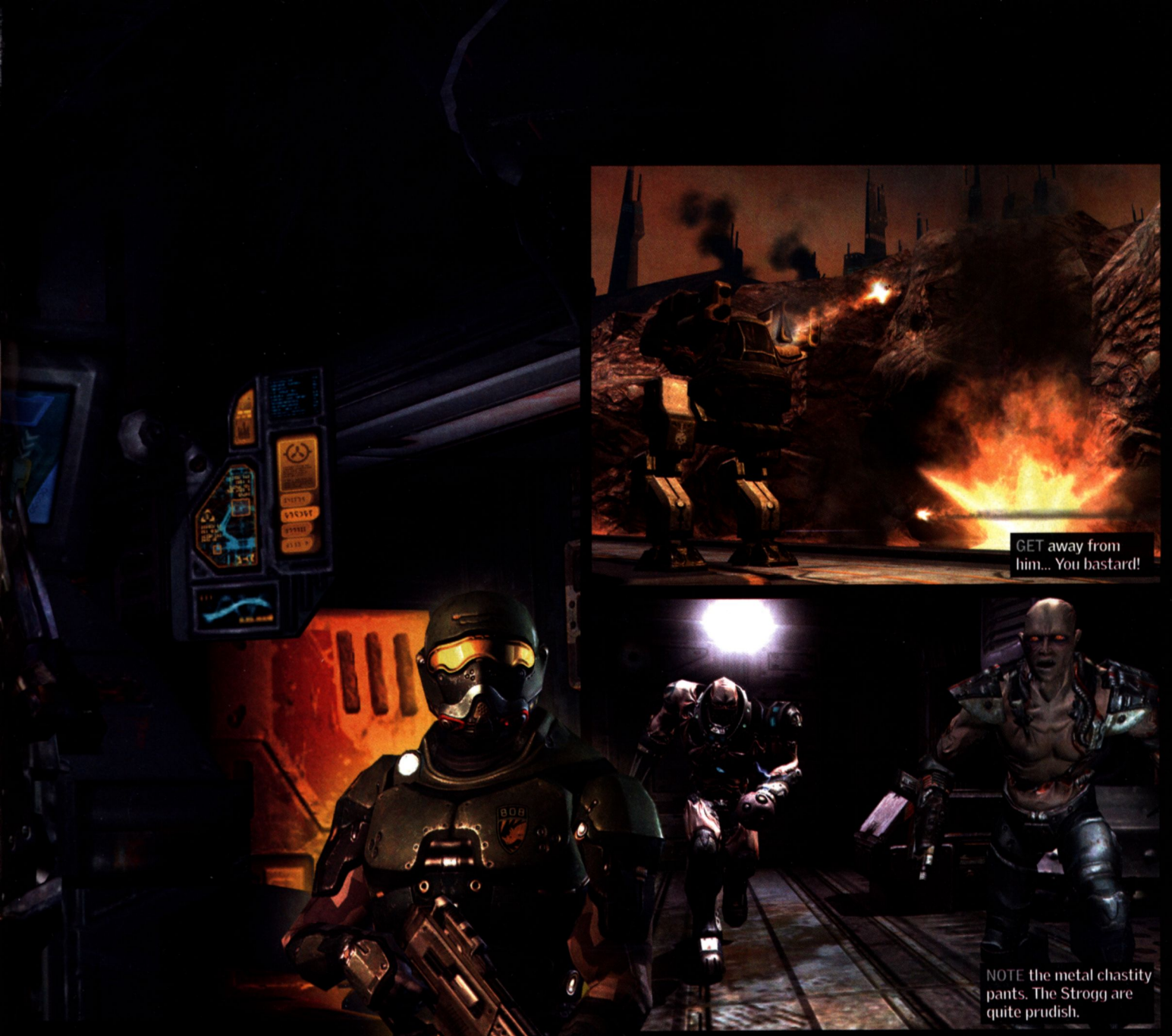
IF I CONCENTRATE really hard, then at the back of my peripheral vision I can just about make out the swish of a ponytail as Todd Hollenshead, CEO of id Software, shakes his head in dismay. "No, your other right. Over there. The red armour," he sighs, as I nervously jab the WASD of *Quake 4* deathmatch, walking into walls, falling off ledges and getting hurled into walls through faulty jump-pad use. I've been marked out as a player of remedial standards and Hollenshead is doing his utmost to make me less of a loser. It's horrible, and hard as I push myself I just can't concentrate. It's truly the stuff of nightmares. I'm playing *Quake* in front of the men from id – and the men from id think that I'm a noob. Freud would have a field day.

Normally at this point I'd be prepping myself to regale you with all the reasons that the multiplayer contingent of *Quake 4* is ineffably greater and more wonderful than *Quake III: Arena*. About how id and Raven (they of *Soldier of Fortune* fame who have been entrusted with the coding of id's biomechanical baby) have brought us so far from what we had in 1999 and how reassuring it is to know that in a world of confusion and a climate of fear we can at least rely on computer games to get betterer and betterer all the time. Thing is though, how can a developer improve on a game that it reckons it nailed the last time?

"What *Quake III* was, was... perfect," explained id lead designer Tim Willits to me a few hours before my humiliation. "It's hard to come up with any flaws. There's just such



THE John Deere range had expanded somewhat...



GET away from him... You bastard!

NOTE the metal chastity pants. The Strogg are quite prudish.

a connection between you and the game. It's just raw. Raw action. It's quite simply all about you aiming at someone else. It just has a vital connection between what you want to do, and what happens. It's perfect."

GLAD I SPENT IT WITH YOU

All that sounds like bluster; it pretty much detonates the bullshit detector, but if you sit back and think about it – if you liked the last game, what would you really want changed or improved in vanilla *Quake III: Arena*? Vastly different weapons? Slower gameplay? Realism? Physics objects? Vehicles? The breakneck speed, accuracy and competitive edge of *Quake* multiplayer has never been matched by any other commercial product – not even by *Unreal Tournament*. There are no off-beats in *Quake* – just an endless burst of adrenalin. And, as such, the multiplayer component of the *Quake 4* package is very much of the not broke/don't fix mentality.

And so it was that my playtest took in all the hallmarks of the last iteration of *Quake* deathmatch. Levels that bear no relation whatsoever to real world usage, neon lighting, primary colours, floating weapons and power-ups, tightly designed levels with several clear thoroughfares back and forth, jump-pads that throw you through the air and encourage (that holy-of-holies) the mid-air rail-gun frag: they're all back. Even favourite levels from *Quake III* are making a return – albeit with what Willits calls "neat little twists" and recast with the Doom 3 engine. "It's all about continuing that competitive, skill-based action," Willits explains. "There are lots of games that we play at work that are really, really fun. Lots of them. But if you happen to get in the bigger tank then you're simply going to win. But when you're playing *Quake*, well then it's just all about the skill."

EVEN the cannon fodder looks mean and hard...

Quake 4's very nature – high action and invasion – means it's more varied than id's last offering

This was certainly true in what we played – for the most part a level entitled The Fragging Ground. It was CTF in its purest form: two symmetrical bases with passages running between them and a concourse in its centre replete with jump-pads and power-ups, the action ebbing and flowing between attack and defence. In terms of weapons, the plasma gun and BFG 10k are out (presumably returned to the *Doom* universe where they belong) and replaced with the spiffy dark matter gun and (in a throwback to the *Quake* of old) a handy nail-gun. The tight balancing, however, remains the same if – in my opinion at least – slightly tweaked away from former benefits given by



"HE'S in the trees!"
"What trees?"



EVERY gruff soldier stereotype is well catered for.



SURELY there are Strogg built to be accountants?

Territorial Pissing (about)

***Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* prepares for conquest in the London suburbs**

When we spoke to id lead designer Tim Willits he was fresh from visiting his cronies at Splash Damage in London, the men entrusted with the creation of the extremely exciting prospect that is *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*. After a detailed description of a glorious victory won by the id/Activision hierarchy over a collection of youthful, spotty Splash Damage playtesters ("We just laid this defence down that was amazing! They were sending all these hovertanks in, and we were, like, bombing the bridge! And I was shooting all these rockets down!"), we asked exactly what it was that would nudge the new *ET* over *Battlefield 2*. "Well *Battlefield* is real easy to play and everyone can jump in," explained Willits, "but *ET* is much more about strategy and classes that really force you to work together. Like in *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* there'll be four or five things your team needs to do to win, and what classes you play will shift as you play the game – you may want to be an engineer at the beginning to lay down your radar before switching to a soldier and so on." A threat to the *BF2* crown? Could be, could be...

higher-end weapons. In the right hands the trusty rail-gun, however, still reigns supreme.

BOX OF DELIGHTS

Whereas in *Doom 3* the multiplayer felt at best like a failed experiment, and at worst a tacked-on afterthought, many punters will buy *Quake 4* for the multiplayer alone. It's about as original as those new Doritos packets that open longways instead of at the top (still tasting as nice as they ever did, I might add) but it remains a remarkably solid second string to the *Quake 4* bow. But what about the first string? Is the FPS war between the marines and the Strogg going to be any cop? If I may, I'd like to approach this in two ways. First by addressing those who got bored in *Doom 3* (I know you exist, I got your letters) and then with everyone together as one big happy throng of gamers.

First group, please come this way. *Quake 4* feels a lot like *Doom 3*, this much cannot be denied. It has the same video links, similar interior environments, bodies that disappear into green stuff in the same way that imps burned away into red stuff, computers that are operated in the same manner and a general structure to its run-and-gun sections that is resolutely familiar. From what I've played, if *Quake 4* were to be at a teenage party where a bottle of schnapps has been purloined from a parent's drinks cabinet, then it would without a shadow of a doubt end up copping off with the Mean Green Marine's Martian Adventures in the corner... while *Far Cry* and *Half-Life 2* sit on the couch being a bit more sophisticated and pretending that they've smoked cigarettes loads of times before. This is hardly a newsflash – *Doom* and *Quake* are from the same engine and pretty much the same stable after all – but it is worth pointing out that some of those with chainsaws to grind against *Doom 3* might not be in the right frame of mind for *Quake 4* either. Right, the others can come in now.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

The very nature of *Quake 4* – that of high action and invasion – means that it's far more varied than id's last offering. From the *Aliens*-style jumpship opening and subsequent crash landing onwards, the



CUE the obligatory 'arse-wiping' gag...

LIVE AND TIMES OF...
RAVEN



Heretic
Raven uses the Doom engine to great effect when creating the FPS fantasy imp-blaster.

1994



Take No Prisoners
Top-down shooter that Will will defend to the grave, but is ignored by everyone else.

1997



Soldier of Fortune
Mullins disturbed with gruesome decapitations and dodgy 'tache. The '02 sequel is even gorier.

2000

Star Wars: Jedi Knight – Jedi Academy
Outcast's sequel uses a modified Quake III engine for 'saber laughs.

2003



HOPEFULLY we'll be able to control these in *ET: Quake Wars*.



FRIENDLY AI goes way beyond the *Doom 3* dog robots.



Multiplayer *Quake* is the deathmatch version of Heinz Big Soup – chunky and satisfying

Ghosts in the Machines

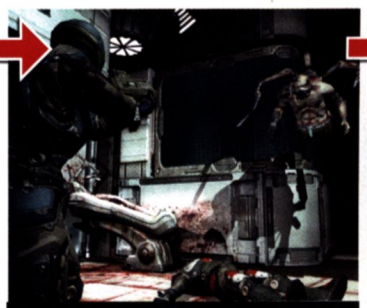
Many would criticise the Strogg for their love of rusty sawblades and forced amputation. But they only want to be loved.



HAPPY Strogg drones kiss their wives goodbye and head off for an exciting day of human hunting and growling.



THANKFULLY, living or dead humans can become vital parts (and we mean *parts*) of the war machine.



THE lucky buggers who are alive get a fresh lick of paint and a fresh pair of legs in the hover-doctor's surgery.



WHILE the dear departed are hung on spikes and await recycling. The Strogg always vote Green, y'see.



WE'VE been away from this weapon for far too long...

player is surrounded by other marines – both to fight alongside in squads and to watch die in hideous ways. While opening a door in *Doom 3* would invariably prompt a scripted 'jump point', opening a *Quake 4* door results in sequences that involve marines either getting mangled or pulling off some particularly nifty gunplay. There's always stuff going on to grab your attention – a real cinematic edge – and what claustrophobic solitary adventurings there are deep in the guts of the Strogg war machine are neatly interspersed with hurtling around wide open spaces on the surface in *Halo*-esque hovertanks and battling alongside other members of Rhino Squad. You also come across a Badger Squad, but needless to say they're not quite as cool. The heavily publicised 'evil car factory' sequence in which your struggling body enters the Stroggification process after capture is also set to add to variety within the gameplay, since after the excellently presented slicing, dicing and multi-amputation carried out on your body you come out a far different proposition than you were when you went in...

In short, *Quake 4* single-player won't be rocket science – it just revels in its sci-fi stereotypes, from the "Who's this guy? He could get us all killed!" opening all the way through to the *Aliens/Riddick*-styled walker that you stomp about in later in the game fighting giant Strogg spider robots. It's the sort of game that'll have you happily shutting down the higher parts of your brain that millions of years of evolution have sought to create, just so that the part of you that enjoys explosions, gore, unremitting action and that unquantifiably musky scent of men in serious trouble can be given free rein.

For me though, in terms of excitement the multiplayer just edges it. You forget, you really do, but multiplayer *Quake* is like the deathmatch version of Heinz Big Soup – big, chunky, satisfying and running through your system as fast as lightning. Amazingly enough, at the time of writing there's a new build in the id offices that's running 20 per cent faster than the already hyper-nifty version I played three days ago. And I'm still buzzing, I really am. You should have seen me when I pulled my act back together – two rail-gun kills and a frag from the spinning melee blade of my gauntlet prompting a "That's it man, you're on fire!" from the id guru standing behind me. Of course he might have been talking to the guy sitting on the machine next to me, or even to someone who had come into the room and happened to be burning. It didn't matter though, my manhood had been reclaimed. The joys of *Quake* deathmatch are coming back to the ascendancy... PCZ



HOT SHOTS

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II

DEVELOPER EA Los Angeles **PUBLISHER** EA
WEBSITE www.bfme2.ea.com **ETA** Spring 2006

YES, J.R. HARTLEY'S books get a second lease of life. Whereas the first Middle-earth game appealed to moviegoers, the aim of the second is to win back the approval of the RTS hardcore with a deeper tactical approach. Furthermore, EA has snapped up the rights to J.R.R. Tolkien's books. While maintaining the look and feel of the films, and running concurrently with the trilogy, this gives the game greater scope in story terms, and it will even add to the fiction. The development team is aware of the repercussions of tampering with the archetypal fantasy work, and is doing its utmost to treat the source material with respect. Expect EA's finest urban, gangsta Middle-earth: Street this time next year then...













The Bigger Picture

1. **WATCH YOUR BACK**
Just when you think you're having a quiet day, a huge beast comes along and eats you. Typical.

2. **MIDGET GEMS**
Three new factions have been introduced, namely dwarves, elves and goblins. Here dwarves tackle the Red Horn Pass.

3. **WE CAN BE HEROES**
As in the first game, hero units are available. This time, their appearance and upgrades are customisable.

4. **IN THE NAVY**
Like watersports? Then you'll be thrilled to see these new naval units, not to mention the reflect-astic water effects.

5. **ELVISH LIVES**
Bases play an important role and fortresses can be upgraded. (Got to keep those youths at bay somehow.)

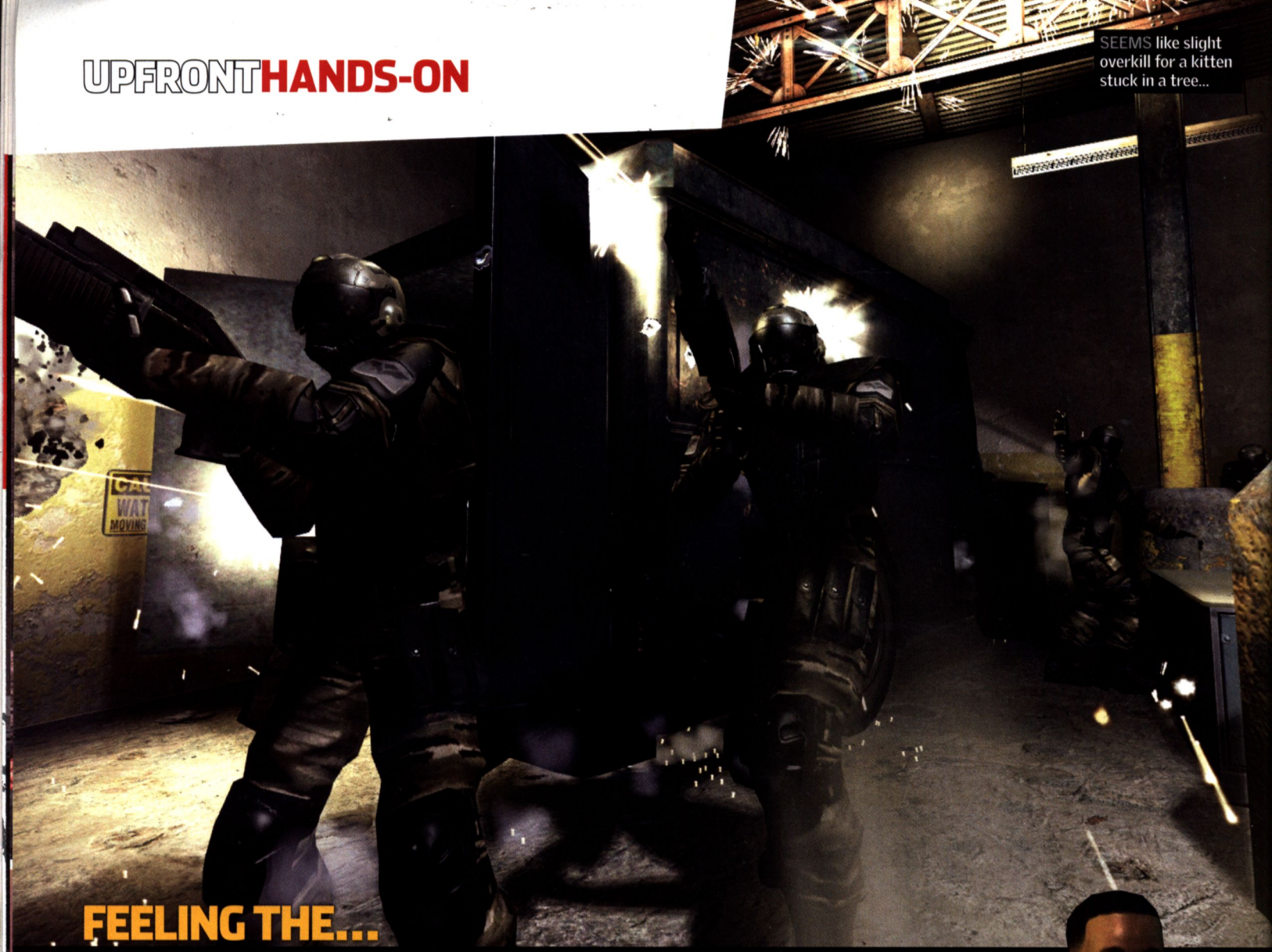
6. **BACK IN BLACK**
Any self-respecting fan will recognise this scene as being in North Middle-earth, and that lot as The Black. Obviously.

7. **SPIDER RIDERS**
A host of creatures have been added, including spiders and dragons. Here, the spider riders attack the dwarves.

8. **LOOKING GOOD**
Graphical improvements abound – look at the luscious tilework on this gaff.







SEEMS like slight overkill for a kitten stuck in a tree...

FEELING THE...

F.E.A.R.

Armed to the teeth and primed to kill, *Anthony Holden* goes toe-to-toe with an eight-year-old girl. Seems like a fair fight...

DEVELOPER Monolith **PUBLISHER** VU Games **WEBSITE** whatisfear.com/us **PREVIOUSLY IN...** Issue 157

THE LOWDOWN

New game from the makers of *NOLF* and *AVP2*	✓
High-impact action	✓
Gorgeous next-gen engine	✓
Scary as dickens	✓
Under the gloss, it could be quite simplistic	✗

ETA Sept '05

WE'VE BEEN BANGING on about this game pretty hard lately, so you could be forgiven for thinking we've already said everything there is to say about it. But bear with us, because we're convinced there's something a bit special going on here. All evidence points to *F.E.A.R.* being the best single-player shooter since *Half-Life 2* and a contender for game of the year, not to mention the next small step on the road to graphical nirvana.

What exactly makes it so special is a little more difficult to discern. Many – including our former editor Dave Woods – are getting hung up on the name, emitting girlish squeals about *F.E.A.R.* being the 'scariest game ever'. You've got the barely perceptible flashes of eviscerated flesh. The fleeting glimpses of the creepy little girl in the red dress. The scary geezer with the blood-caked mug appearing by your side and then disappearing in a puff of dust. But whether or not all this makes *F.E.A.R.* the scariest game ever is kind of beside the point. Rather, the horror elements simply add another dimension to an already potent mix of explosive, high-impact action, deep story elements and scintillating SFX. Hand in hand with some of the best AI on the planet, this is what makes *F.E.A.R.* so compelling.

GET PAXTON

VU Games recently invited us to play another chunk of the game – the first four levels no less, complete in everything but name and the occasional graphical hangnail – and we got a full-force blast of the formula



MOST sparks ever in one screenshot.



BLOODY kids, why don't they look when they cross the road?

"With horror, you have to feed it slowly, so we had to place these key spooky moments carefully"
Rob Loftus, **producer, *F.E.A.R.***

in action. The game kicks off, as you may recall, with the escape of psychic bad guy and raving nutcase Paxton Fettle, a telepathically-enhanced military commander trained to lead an army of cloned super-soldiers. Each one of these chaps is a *Universal Soldier*-like automaton, with full battle awareness but not much in the way of conversational ability. In short, they're unfeeling killing machines, and Paxton has 1,000 of the buggers at his beck and call.

At the outset of the game, you – a new recruit to an elite paranormal strike team – are sent to infiltrate the complex held by Fettle, teaming up with a Delta team to creep in via the back door. The Deltas clearly don't take kindly to their new point man, and send you off to open a gate for them in a nearby switch room. While you're gone Something Bad happens and (minor spoiler warning), you return to find the entire Delta Team dead. And not just dead, but reduced to bloody, meat-flecked skeletons, as if a horde of peckish Texans has set upon the group in your absence.

The effect is so over-the-top it's almost comical. It recalls the kind of sick humour that made Monolith's debut shooter *Blood* such gory fun, and while not producing much genuine fear, is a nicely ominous way to set you on your path. Later, when the fleeting visions start to creep in and you're clearly being stalked by both Paxton Fettle and the little girl, the manifest sense of unease really starts to build.

Producer Rob Loftus explains: "The thing with horror is that you have to feed it slowly. In a game, you have to maintain things over a much longer period of time than a film, so we had to place these key spooky moments very carefully."

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Moving further into the level, this intimate attention to pacing also extends to gunplay. Rather than facing a continuous barrage of foes as in most shooters, the action in *F.E.A.R.* is broken up into discrete firefights, with long, creepy sections of relative inactivity in between. In this respect it's more reminiscent of *Rainbow Six*-style tactical shooters than, say, *Half-Life 2*, a slant that lends the game a distinct edge of authenticity.

"That's definitely a deliberate thing," says Loftus. "It's much more realistic than taking on an endless stream of guys, like the whole Third Reich is filing through a corridor



AND that's why we always wear safety gear around the home.

towards you. Plus, it allows you to create specific, memorable scenes – so when you walk into an area the enemies might be patrolling, coming down a corridor towards you, bursting through a set of doors. It means you get to capture moments and vary the way you encounter enemies."

FIREWORKS

Of course, once a firefight does kick off, it's a truly magnificent thing. Sparks fly, glass shatters, chunks of masonry explode into dust, shockwaves blur and physics objects scatter to the four winds. The inspiration is clearly the lobby shoot-out from *The Matrix* and the effect is remarkably similar – if anything even more frantic and debris-strewn. Plus, you can even slow down time and perform improbable flying scissor kicks.

The developers of *F.E.A.R.* use the word 'cinematic' a lot, and it's not hard to see why. Aside from *The Matrix* influence, many of the environments are simply handcrafted to produce movie-like moments. One firefight, for example, takes place in a kind of warehouse loading bay. It's the most typical FPS environment you could imagine, with a maze of shipping containers, dumpsters, crates and so on. However, parked conveniently in their midst are several 18-wheeler truck trailers, with enemies frequently lurking or patrolling on the other side, feet clearly visible. Shooting the shins out of the guards and watching them collapse in agony evokes too many Hollywood action flicks to name.

Of course, the enemies are generally too smart to fall for such tricks. Our most recent brush with the game gave us a better look at the capabilities of the AI, and to say we're impressed would be putting it lightly. The AI appears to combine the best elements of *Far Cry* and *Half-Life 2*, marrying high-level squad behaviour with intelligent radio chat and a well-developed sense of self-preservation. Enemies visibly co-operate and communicate, using their numbers to full effect to corner you and flank you out. Their agility is unsurpassed, as they lean around corners, kick down furniture, shimmy through crawlspaces and jump over obstacles. (Of course, a lot of the obstacles are put there just so they *will* jump over them, but it still adds to the illusion of sentience.)

In one early scene, a shotgun-toting chap barrels into a room and kicks down a shelving

An Enigma Wrapped In a Puzzle

Don't *F.E.A.R.* the lever



F.E.A.R.: Bertha with guns?

With everything else seemingly tailored towards a gritty, realistic experience (apart from all the paranormal goings-on of course), it seemed slightly incongruous to find such a prosaic thing as a switch puzzle in *F.E.A.R.* One sequence involves finding a valve to raise the water level in a flooded room so that you can swim to the next area – straight out of *Super Mario 64* (among others). Another involves finding a switch to rotate a footbridge through 180 degrees, a chore that does little more than halt your progress for a minute or two.

"We've got light puzzle elements, nothing heavy," explains producer Rob Loftus. "We don't want you to get to a room and find a sequence of levers and buttons and all that. It's not realistic. We've tried to make things that sit more naturally in the world."



WOOLWORTHS had tightened security somewhat



BLACK leather is the main look going for evil-doers...

THE STORY SO FAR...

MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS

11 years ago...
Monolith is founded in Kirkland, Washington, and work begins on the first LithTech engine.

1994



First up...
The outfit makes a gory debut with darkly humorous *Doom*-clone *Blood*.

1997

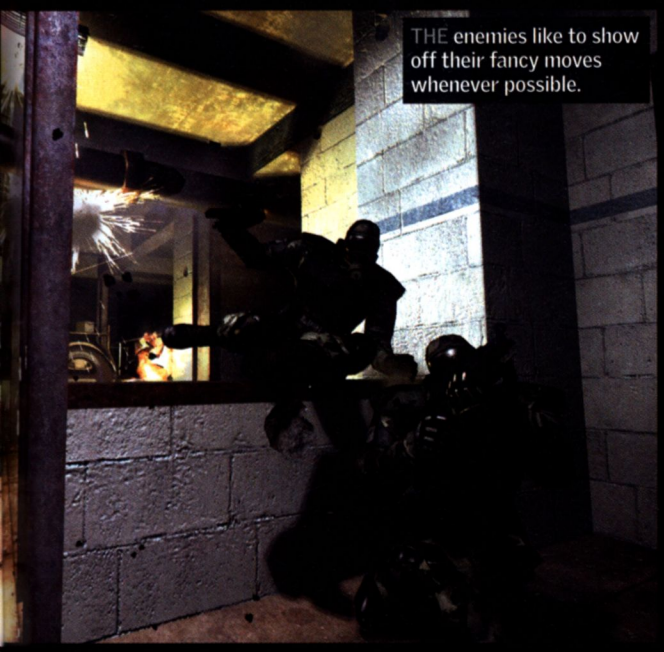
It's alive...
The entertaining but overlooked *Aliens Vs Predator 2* scares the bejesus out of us all.

2001



So sad...
The Matrix Online isn't all that, putting the last nail in the coffin of a once-revered franchise.

2005



THE enemies like to show off their fancy moves whenever possible.



THE heavy armour soldiers are not to be messed with.

We're impressed with the AI, as it combines the best elements of *Far Cry* and *Half-Life 2*

The Movies

***F.E.A.R.* is packed to bursting with film references and influences. Here are our top four...**



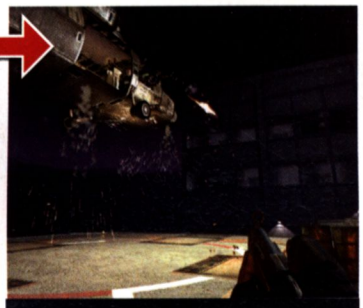
THE MATRIX: The debris and chaos of the firefights makes *F.E.A.R.* reek of the famous lobby scene.



KOREI (SÉANCE): The creepy girl in *F.E.A.R.* was inspired by Japanese horror flicks, especially *Korei*.



HARD BOILED: If this bloke was wearing cheesy triad gear, it could easily be John Woo's classic gunfest.



DIE HARD: Look! It's a helicopter rooftop scene with guns. It must be *Die Hard*. Or a million other films.

unit, but on replaying the level we were surprised to learn this is not a scripted behaviour – he kicks it over nine times out of ten, but only because it affords good cover. "Very little of what you see is scripted," agrees Loftus. "There are limitations we had to put in for the sake of cut-scenes etc, but other than that it's just the AI evaluating the situation and acting accordingly."

LOUDMOUTHS

As smart as they are however, the enemies are also quite obliging in how vocally they confer. You can usually hear them coming a mile off because of all the radio chat, and they frequently give away their movements with phrases like: "I saw a flashlight – you go check it out," or "he's trying to flank us!"

We suspect this is just part of the learning curve, and later enemies will presumably be slightly more stealthy. Certainly the first mini-boss you encounter – a hard-as-nails heavy-armour soldier – doesn't give himself away, preferring to burst through a pair of doors and kick your arse into next week. Plus, there are the ninja-like assassin characters – not yet seen in-game – that can scale walls, turn invisible and possibly even teleport to and fro.

Quite clearly, we've only seen a fraction of what this game has to offer. Screenshots and movies give tantalising glimpses of other moments: car chases through city streets; encounters with huge bosses; helicopter assaults on exposed rooftops. As much as we're desperate to experience all this first-hand – not to mention find out what the hell that creepy little girl is about – we're grateful to VU Games for not ruining the game for us. Better yet, *PC ZONE* will be the first magazine to get its hands on the final code, so look out for the full exclusive review and playable demo next month. PCZ





ARGUE THE TOSS

THIS MONTH: QUICK-SAVES

Dear Jamie,
Quick-saves are the work of Satan, reducing the action in an FPS to a 'shoot someone, save, shoot someone, move forward' drudge. Unfortunately, developers seem to have difficulty designing a game that's a challenge without making it so bloody hard that your finger is constantly hovering over the F5 key. There are exceptions of course: *Far Cry* –it's pitched perfectly and gives you a real sense of achievement.
Dave Woods

Dear Dave,
You might want to play games to 'achieve'; I want to enjoy myself and there's nothing worse than having to keep re-playing the same bit of a game over and over again. If battling against AI isn't a big enough challenge, restrict the number of quick-saves you use. Oh, and your example of *Far Cry* is ridiculous – "pitched perfectly" is it? Christ, I've replayed so many bits of that bloody game it's like a recurring nightmare.
Jamie Sefton

Dear Jamie,
It's easy to say 'restrict the number of quick-saves you use' but it's like porn – if it's there, no-matter how many times you vow not to, you'll watch it. The concept of hitting a key as many times as you like to save your progress is pandering to the lowest common denominator – like going to the cinema and letting anyone rewind at any point if they don't understand what's going on. DW

Dear Dave,
I don't get your cinema analogy at all – if anything, abolishing quick-saves is like being told you can't go to the toilet until the film's finished. JS

Dear Jamie,
Well how about a system that limits the number of quick-saves then? Like in *Soldier Of Fortune II*? Muppets like yourself feverishly banging away in easy mode get oodles of unnecessary save points, while pros such as myself get a mere three or four per level. Works for me. DW

Dear Dave,
Are you insinuating that I play everything on easy mode? JS

Dear Jamie
I've been sitting next to you and your battered quick-save key for three years. I know that you play everything on easy mode. DW.

Dear Dave,
Up yours. JS



IN SPACE, no one can hear you scream (about bugs).

BEYOND BOILING POINT

www.deep-shadows.com
ETA: TBA

Developers of the free-roaming FPS take on an even more Herculean task with *Precursors*

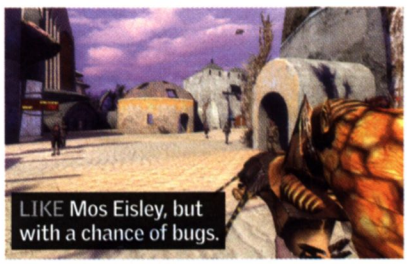
BOILING POINT WAS a challenging game. A challenge to play due to its inherent bugginess, and a massive challenge to design – what with the breathtaking ambition of the project and the go-anywhere, do-anything mentality of its massive sandbox play area.

Not content with this, however, developer Deep Shadows is about to take its crackpot ideas even further with *Precursors*. "We're creating gloomy worlds that have been devastated by all sorts of disasters, asteroids with abandoned mines in them, hot desert planets, unusual and picturesque jungle planets," explains brilliantly monikered designer Sergey Zabaryanskyy. "There'll be towns, space ports, space stations..."

Taking its cue from free-roaming genre-daddy *Elite*, Deep Shadows intends to create galaxy-galavanting gameplay that'll not only have you flying spacecraft, but also visiting and walking around roughly a hundred different alien worlds in classic FPS fashion. Should you get attacked by space pirates mid-flight, it's even promised that you'll be able to leave the controls of your ship and battle off the invaders in the corridors of your vessel.

After the debacle of *Boiling Point's* buggy debut, you'd think that efforts would be made to scale back on the next project – the idea of which prompts a caustic reaction from Sergey. "The main goal behind the founding of Deep Shadows was to create new and original RPG and action worlds," he explains. "Yes, it's very risky – but we want to bring something new to the genre."

After listening to a mission description that covers everything from alien invasions to dealing with space anomalies – not to mention being given mech-warrior armour by frightened alien villagers and tasked with the destruction of many evil robots – we'll go on record as saying it's a wildly ambitious, yet brilliant project. Although, if *Boiling Point* is anything to go by, we'll all be octogenarians by the time the bloody thing is finished.



LIKE Mos Eisley, but with a chance of bugs.



BUGS: beyond the frontier.

PC ZONE NEEDS YOU!

As a part of a spiffy upcoming series of features entitled Reality Check Redux, we need to get in contact with you! Yes, you! For reasons that will become painfully apparent, we need to get in touch with *PC ZONE* readers who work in any of the following fields:

- **Design or manufacture of barrels**
- **Design or manufacture of crates**
- **Design or manufacture of toilets**
- **Installation or manufacture of air-vents**
- **Military training and drill (especially assault courses)**
- **Crime-fighting**

If you have a job connected to any of the above, then please get in touch. We'll give you free games, you'll get your face and opinions into the mag and you'll be the envy of at least one of your friends. Fire a mail off to letters@pczone.co.uk without delay!



ACES HIGH

CD & DVD

www.codemasters.co.uk/heroes
ETA: September

Going both up-diddley-up-up, and down-diddley-down-down with *Heroes Of The Pacific*



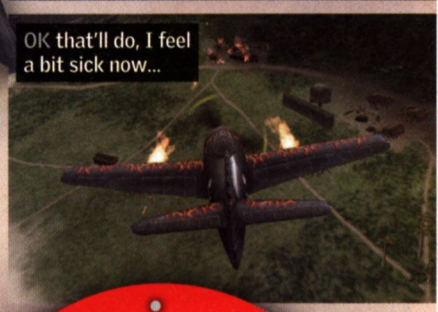
ALWAYS A BIT partial to a slice of dogfighting, we booted up some 'almost-finished' code of *Heroes Of The Pacific* and were pleasantly surprised. An action-packed flight sim in the vein of *Secret Weapons Over Normandy* (or, if your memory goes back a bit further, *Crimson Skies*), it's a sim that gives you kicks via the medium of blowing stuff up rather than fiddling with flaps and ailerons.

Realism is fairly absent, what with typical missions seeing you shooting down 40 Japanese Zeroes before strafing enemy tanks and dive-bombing aircraft carriers, but to us this is nowt but a good thing.

With re-enactments of many events that will forever live in infamy (and multiplex shitfests starring Ben Affleck) like Pearl Harbour, Wake Island and the Battle of Midway, it's all a rather gung-ho affair – made oddly entertaining by the chatter of your wingmen. With up to 150 birds in the skies around you at any one time, it's all rather exciting. What ho.







Putting a spell on you...

Life as a *PC ZONE* writer gets no better than watching a demonstration of a German RTS. Roll on *SpellForce 2*!

spellforce.jowood.de/sf2 | ETA: November

WATCHING SPELLFORCE 2 in action, we were gobsmacked. Get this: you can send these worker blokes out who chop down trees for wood. Or, you can get them to collect stone from these rocky outcrops. Or you can even mine metal. By bringing back enough of these three materials (oh, it gets even better: there's a fourth material – moonstone) you can build houses, armouries and barracks to produce soldiers and weapon upgrades. Honestly, it's genius. The kids are going to love it.

OK, OK. We'll stop being grumpy. True, *SpellForce 2* does feature all those RTS conventions we've come to know and be bored silly by, but it's got plenty more to offer besides, not least a scintillating graphics engine that allows the action to be viewed from any angle, with amazing lighting, reflection and ambient effects. When some of the game's huge fantasy beasts – ents, trolls, gryphons, that kind of thing – are going at it tooth and nail, things look pretty spectacular.

While the first *SpellForce* turned a few heads with its mix of RTS and RPG elements, for its successor, German developer Phenomic (a company that sounds like something you might find up your nose) has gone back to the drawing board to create a leaner, more focused affair. Less constant mouse wiggling, fewer tech trees and (basically) far less of all the stuff so favoured in the game's Germanic homelands. Whether it catches on over here is another question, but it certainly has the might of polygons on its side.


GRR. It's some scary German RTS monsters.





GOBSHITE

"WELL THAT'S the presentation over, so bring in the midgets and the clowns! Y'know Microsoft are a pretty conservative company: I asked for hookers and midgets, but nooo..."

ZONE hero Chris Taylor, he of *Total Annihilation* and *Supreme Commander* fame, finishes off the best game presentation of recent years (*Dungeon Siege II*) in magnificent style.

"PLACE DORMITORIES and cell blocks, mess halls and gymnasiums, but don't expect to be able to build Death Row right away!"

The blurb for *Prison Tycoon*. Sounds great, doesn't it?



OI!

YANNIS!

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

Will Porter **talks to Yannis Mallat – the man behind the ongoing tales of the *Prince Of Persia***

Who are ya?



NAME Yannis Mallat
DEVELOPER Ubisoft Montreal
POSITION *Prince Of Persia* executive producer
AGE 31
GAMES WORKED ON *Prince Of Persia* series, *Rayman Advance*, *Business Tycoon*, *Wall Street Tycoon*
FAVOURITE GAME Tie between *Dungeon Master*, *Half-Life*, *Beyond Good & Evil* and the *GTA* series

Q Going all the way back to *The Sands Of Time*, why was the decision made to make the Prince such an unorthodox (and polite) hero?

A Well, back then the Prince was a young and fairly immature hero, who inadvertently unleashed a terrible weapon and had to face the consequences of his actions. We felt that this was a perfect start for the Prince's adventures and his evolution throughout the *Sands Of Time* trilogy. From a young and naïve Prince in *The Sands Of Time*, to a mature and seasoned warrior in *Warrior Within* and finally, now, to a true epic Hero.

***POP* fans seem to be split in two – there are those who adore the charm of *The Sands Of Time*, and those who prefer the high-octane *Warrior Within*. Is the introduction of the two Princes of *POP3* aimed at bridging the divide?**

Our aim for *POP3* is to make it the climax of the *Sands Of Time* trilogy – as exciting as *Warrior Within* and as unique as *The Sands Of Time*. But we really, really don't want to just serve up the two games lumped together. Everything in the game will reflect this from the introduction of the Dark Prince to the new urban environment setting. We reckon that it'll please all the fans of the *POP* series...

So how does the introduction of the two princes affect the core gameplay?

The Prince and the Dark Prince have two very different fighting styles, and we've built on the freeform fighting of *Warrior Within* to create two ways of fighting that reflect their distinctive personalities, and make the most of their amazing athletic capabilities. First off, the Prince himself uses the Dagger of Time as his primary weapon, but he can still pick up a secondary weapon from defeated enemies. The Dark Prince, meanwhile, uses the Dagger alongside the Daggertail, a powerful chain-like mid-range weapon with which he'll be able to perform spectacular combos.

Yeah. When we saw the game running we were blown away by the Daggertail. Is it based on a real-life weapon? Or is it just the product of a twisted mind?

No, the Daggertail isn't based on a real-life weapon. Although it is probably true that we have some twisted minds on the team.

Seeing as much of the game appears to be on both the streets and the rooftops of Babylon, is it fair to say that most of the action takes place in recognisably 'real' settings, rather than the more fantastic and stylised towers and dungeons of *Warrior Within*?

Babylon is a city full of contrasts. Everything from mighty palaces to lowly sewers, from a lighter 'high city' of wealth and prosperity to the darker 'low city', home to the poor and decrepit. Our ambition is to deliver the organic feeling of an Oriental city, and in that respect, the pre-production of the game was done by Ubisoft's studio in Casablanca. This allowed us to draw on the daily life of the team to lend some authenticity to the environments. Then again, Babylon will also have a fair amount of fantastic elements – such as the Tower of Babel.

Does the re-introduction of the 'storytelling' narrative structure signal an attempt to get back to the emotional depth of *The Sands Of Time*?

POP3 storytelling will be different from its two predecessors. There will be both voice-over narration and dramatic, memorable cinematic moments. We'll also be placing more emphasis on overheard conversations – things characters say to one another when they don't realise the Prince is around. This will enable us to bring back a lot of the wit and humour that was in *The Sands Of Time*.

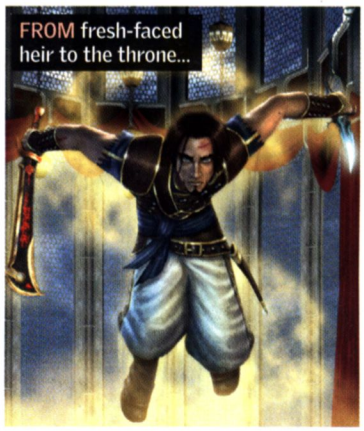
"Our aim is to make *POP3* as exciting as *Warrior Within* and unique as *The Sands Of Time*"

Everyone has a favourite *Prince Of Persia* move. Mine is cleaving zombies in half from behind, or perhaps spinning around a pole. Which is yours?

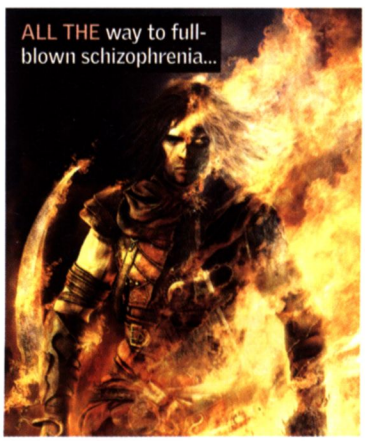
Mine has got to be the counter-retrieve. You know, when you block and retrieve at the last second before your swords clash? Also, countering the big enemies several times in a row back in *The Sands Of Time* was a pure joy.

I'm not sure if you know this, but the ending of *The Sands Of Time*, in which the Prince covers up his unwanted snog with Farah through time-trickery, was included as one of our top 50 moments in gaming. How did you come up with it?

The stolen kiss gag is a good one all right, mainly because it's simple and unexpected at the same time. As far as I remember, as a team we were fantasizing as what we could do with the Dagger of Time and its power to rewind time. And if you put eight guys in a room brainstorming on a topic like that, then trust me... you end up with a stolen kiss gag. If not more. PCZ

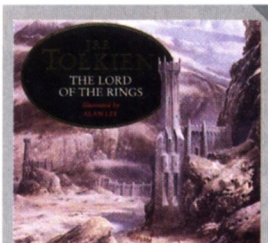

FROM fresh-faced heir to the throne...


THROUGH to dark and moody adolescent...


ALL THE way to full-blown schizophrenia...

YANNIS MALLAT

Where he turns for inspiration...



THE LORD Of The Rings – specifically the way human feelings and fantasy are mixed.



LES Rois Maudits: A book that looks at the story of a line of cursed French kings, starting in 1314.


THE Doors: Whether the Prince's thoughts are influenced by druggy ramblings is up for debate.


MOZART: Despite the *Warrior Within* rawk, Yannis loves a bit of Wolfgang.



IGNORE the fact he's wearing combats. They're still cool in Mexico.

COMING SOON...

TOTAL OVERDOSE

Will Porter – aka the Corona Kid – finds that in Mexico, things blow up really easily...

DEVELOPER Deadline Games **PUBLISHER** Eidos **WEBSITE** www.totaloverdose.com **PREVIOUSLY IN...** Issue 154

THE LOWDOWN

- Tongue-in-cheek, *Desperado*-inspired action ✓
- Neat inclusion of combo-chasing and point-gaining ✓
- Relatively free-roaming inter-level town ✓
- Plays well on PC despite obvious console bias ✓
- Jury is out on whether charm will last entire game ✗

ETA Sept 05

WHEN FACED WITH a generic third-person shooter with bullet-time, you have to make a decision. Do you deride it, kick it where it hurts, call it a filthy console mudblood (sorry, read the new *Harry Potter* book recently) and leave it begging for mercy? Or do you give it a chance, lock your lips into an 'ooh' position and play it for the mindless shebang it was born to be?

Well, it's looking increasingly like *Total Overdose* will prove to be part of the latter camp – with the caveat that we've only played four of the 20 levels, so the old 'variety' chestnut may yet loom large. It's essentially the lovechild of *Max Payne* and *Serious Sam* – albeit grown to adolescence and obsessed with Robert Rodriguez's films, Salma Hayek's breasts and the mashing of buttons in combo-chasing games like the *Tony Hawk* series. Confused? You won't be.

Left button shoots, right button zeroes in for a headshot and spacebar does all the sparkly magic with shoot-dodging and wall gymnastics that would put the youngest girl in the Ukrainian gymnastics team to shame. Barrels explode, Mexicans die and points are delivered for style – which in turn gifts you extra health and Loco Moves such as *Desperado*-style machine guns in guitar cases or one-shot-kill golden guns.

LET'S PLAY

In fact, in our playtest, the mission at hand became secondary to the pursuit of points, since a timer is always ticking from your last kill, showing how long you have to continue on your point-totting rampage. Eidos is clearly keen on the idea that obsessives will try to string out combos that last entire levels – assuming, of course, that they don't go outside and get a girlfriend first.

Another feature that's remained under lock-and-key until now is the sandbox-y town that you can traverse, if you so choose, in between levels and challenges. Hidden until now due to fears of unfair *GTA* comparisons (unfair since it's far more reminiscent of the wide open everything-is-a-grinding-surface arenas of *Tony Hawk*), it's another avenue for point-claiming. The flippancy of the game is very much on show here too, with mini-games like a blood bath in which all the pedestrians turn into versions of something similar to the skeletal Manny from *Grim Fandango*. The heavy use of chickens and exploding piñatas in the game proper also goes some way to boosting the silliness factor.

Whether or not the story and characterisations are all they're cracked up to be is also up for question, an area in which it's perfectly fine to compare the line-up of Mexican scuz-buckets to the sublime *San Andreas*. As a no-brain actioner, however, it's a far better prospect than other console fare – and surprisingly well-adapted for mouse control too. You can also steal hats from people who get angry about it and shoot you. No particular reason for it. But if you want a sombrero, then it's yours. More hats in games please. PCZ

WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...

CARELESSLY PLACED TNT
Mexican Health & Safety legislation is decidedly lax on both explosive barrels and explosive crates. If you're clever you can see what comes next...

EGG FOR MY TEA
Chickens are the official #3 funniest animals after dogs and monkeys, the comedy value of which *Total Overdose* frequently indulges in.

FINAL COUNTDOWN
This pie-chart/timer affair ticks away the time since your last kill. When it hits zero, your combo-bonus-score-ifier thing runs out.

NOT FADE AWAY
You normally see this sign on your VCR, but don't be scared! This means you can magically rewind time when you get shot to bits.

YOUR GOOD SELF
The man in mid-air is Ram Cruz. His quest to discover his father's murderer involves a lot of leaping and, indeed, murder.





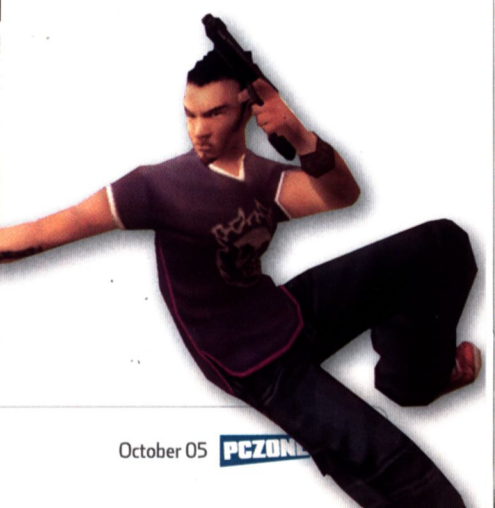
JUMPING left, jumping right, jumping upside-down – *Total Overdose* has every sort of jumping ever invented.

The heavy use of chickens and exploding piñatas also goes some way to boosting the silliness factor









META TEST

www.metaboli.co.uk

Meet Metaboli, the online game rental company that's causing nervous looks on the high street



PUBLISHERS ARE GETTING more and more conscious of the online piracy taking lumps out of their profits, and as such are making steps (some bigger than others) towards embracing online distribution – which is where Blockbuster-baiting Metaboli steps in. Essentially a service that gives you broadband access to an ever-growing number of triple-A games, Metaboli is a monthly rental service supported by names as big as Ubisoft, Eidos, Atari and Microsoft – with a bevy of other major publishers queuing up to sign on the dotted line.

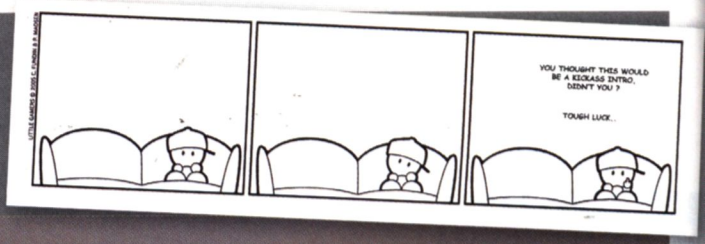
If you're anything like us when we first heard about it, then you'll have reservations – Steam-shaped reservations. But the downloads are fast (you can play games mid-download to boot), customer service is so good they'll ring your land line to help out and most big titles will appear on the service a mere two or three months after they hit the shops. At the time of writing *Act Of War*, *Prince Of Persia: Warrior Within* and *Hitman: Contracts* have just gone up, while *Deus Ex: Invisible War* and *Thief: Deadly Shadows* are set to debut in the next few days. Hell, the fact that you can download whatever you want, whenever you want means that even stuff like *Syberia* is getting a new lease of life.

Once your month is up, of course, all of your downloads will sulk and cry until you reattach their umbilical cord via your credit card – and you won't be able to run any mods either, which is something of a bitch with a game like *Neverwinter Nights*. Nevertheless, it's the way of the future and a largely hassle-free experience – much like having a Cadbury's Christmas Selection Pack of games to dip in and out of at will. It'll set you back £6.95 a month for the Essential selection (older games) and £12.95 a month for the whole gamut of new releases and golden oldies. In a few years this sort of thing will be as common as flying cars and holidays on the moon, so perhaps we should start getting used to it.

Little Terrors

www.little-gamers.com

Interweb comic strip Little Gamers prepares to mock us on a monthly basis



WITH 20,000 HITS a day, the creators of www.little-gamers.com happily supplement their income through the gentle ribbing of PCs (a platform they call the 'heathen box'), the mocking of games in general and countless masturbation gags. In other words, apart from the mistrusting PCs stuff, they're our kind of people. Which is why they're going to be insulting us every month in your shiny new-look *PC ZONE* – although we've told them that they're not allowed to use the 'C' word.

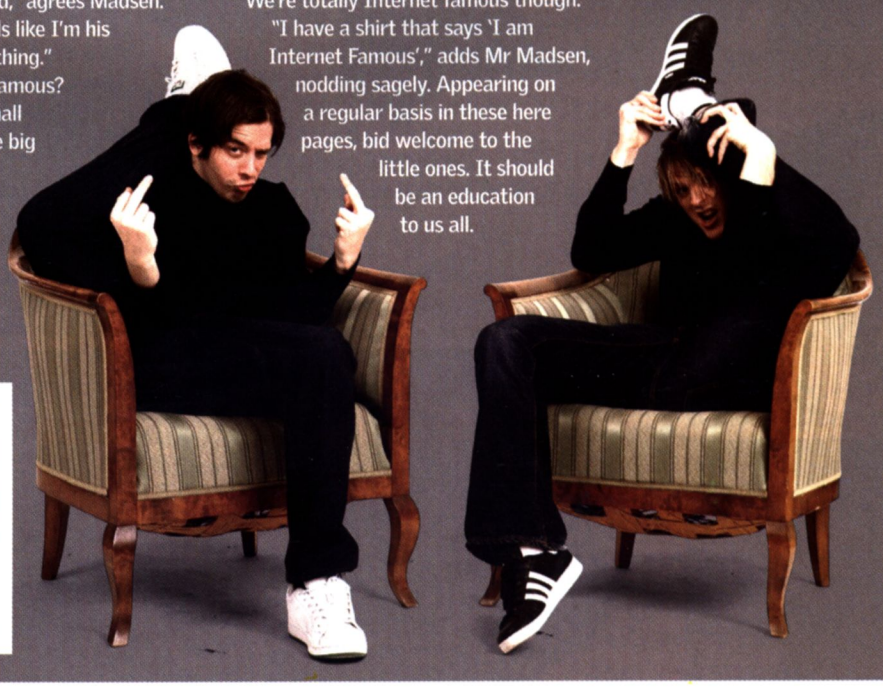
We caught up with Christian Fundin and the mysterious 'Mr' Madsen before they decamped to the San Diego Comic-Con (where they intended to "drink, advocate sex with fans and buy a gun"). "It began as a comic for my friends with my friends in it," explains Christian. "We were living together on and off at the time and I felt the need to ridicule them on a regular basis."

"What he said," agrees Madsen. "Even if it sounds like I'm his toyboy or something."

So are they famous? "We're really small compared to the big boys," says Christian. "But as for the famous, we're the comic everybody knows but nobody reads. So we haven't gotten the 'smash-your-hotel-room' status yet. We're totally Internet famous though."

"I have a shirt that says 'I am Internet Famous'," adds Mr Madsen, nodding sagely. Appearing on a regular basis in these here pages, bid welcome to the little ones. It should be an education to us all.





SPLITTING at the seams: Little Gamers come to *PCZ*.



EXPENSIVE goggles all round as *BF2* fights through the night.

SPECIAL AFFRAY

Battlefield 2 expansion set to make soldiers the l33test of the l33t in *Special Forces*

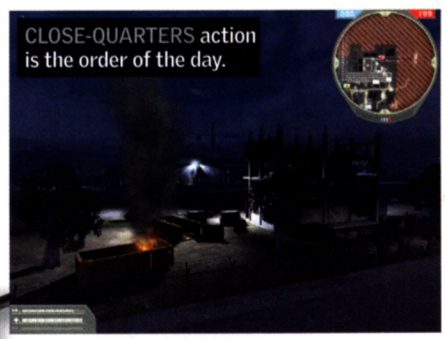
www.eagames.com/official/battlefield/battlefield2/us/home.jsp | ETA: Q3 2005

AN EXPANSION FOR *Battlefield 2* – who'd have thunk it? But far from providing the cavalcade of new super-duper mega-vehicles and jet-boots that might be expected in other games, it's going down a route that'll encourage players to use their feet, wits, cunning and bloody big guns. Although, there'll be a ton of new vehicles to belt around in as well. Obviously.

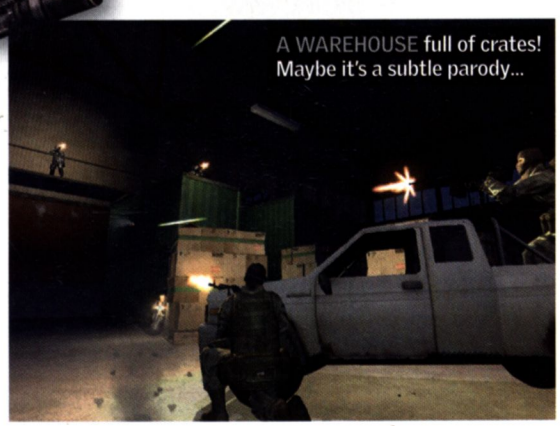
The idea is to make you feel like a lot more of a super-soldier – stealthier, harder and more adept at squad combat. To aid in this there'll be Night Vision (making flashbangs particularly handy, we'd have thought) and the remarkably fun-sounding grappling hook-cum-zip line. With this in hand, when you come across a sniper sniping from one of those spots that everybody snipes from with a single, solitary handy ladder for access, you'll now be able to fire off a grapple-hook, climb up and attack from any angle you like.

The zip line feature will also help speed up your (and your squad's) progress around the map, without everyone automatically sprinting off for big noisy jeeps, while the seven or eight new maps have been designed with closer, more funnelled and grittier combat in mind. Also promised are twelve new base weapons and ten shiny new vehicles.

Now we like the sound of this just fine, but have to admit we're enjoying vanilla *BF2* too much to really desperately want an expansion just yet... although we may have changed our minds come autumn.



CLOSE-QUARTERS action is the order of the day.



A WAREHOUSE full of crates! Maybe it's a subtle parody...

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

A **neo-Nazi** organisation has restarted their promotion of a game designed to encourage racial division and encourage **violence** against ethnic minorities. *Ethnic Cleansing*, a primitive first-person shooter, is published by **Resistance Records**, the loathsome organisation that also distributes so-called **White Power** music, and is owned by America's most powerful neo-Nazi group, the **National Alliance**. In the game, players assume the role of either a **skinhead** or a robe-wearing, noose-carrying **Ku Klux Klan** member. Exploring a thinly-veiled recreation of **New York**, the aim is to kill non-white people. Absurdly, Israeli Prime Minister **Ariel Sharon** makes an appearance as the final boss, wielding a rocket launcher. The game was launched with the slogan: "Celebrate Martin Luther King Day with a virtual Race War!" and the website expands further, explaining: "Your skin is your uniform in this battle for the survival of your kind. The White Race depends on you to secure its existence. Your peoples (sic) enemies surround you in a sea of decay and filth that they have brought to your once clean and White nation. Not one of their numbers shall be spared..." National Alliance chairman **Shawn Walker** drawled: "The whole intent of making this videogame was to make a racially provocative videogame. If it does help promote the separation of the races, then it's been positive and that's what we want." Naturally, anti-gaming critics will attack the medium as opposed to the perpetrators, who are of course **retarded redneck subhuman scum**.

On a more positive note, games can help relieve **cancer**, a report suggests. An article in the **British Medical Journal** has highlighted several examples of gaming's therapeutic potential, claiming that under test conditions children **suffering** from cancer and other **severe** ailments were actually **distracted** from their **pain** by playing games. **Mark Griffiths**, a professor at **Nottingham Trent University**, mused: "Games focus attention away from potential discomfort and, unlike more traditional therapeutic activities, they do not rely on passive movements and sometimes painful manipulation of the limbs." Furthermore, Griffiths crooned: "There is little evidence that moderate frequency of play has serious acute adverse effects."

"Naturally, anti-gaming critics will attack the medium as opposed to the perpetrators, who are of course retarded redneck subhuman scum"

PCZONE CHARTS

ChartTrack

1	–	BATTLEFIELD 2	Issue 157: 94%
2	↑	HALF-LIFE 2	Issue 148: 97%
3	–	GUILD WARS	Issue 156: 94%
4	↓	GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS	Issue 157: 92%
5	↑	THE SIMS 2	Issue 147: 82%
6	–	THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY	Issue 153: 57%
7	↑	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005	Issue 149: 90%
8	NEW	BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005	Issue 158: 68%
9	↓	WORLD OF WARCRAFT	Issue 152: 95%
10	↓	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5	Issue 154: 50%
11	↑	ROME: TOTAL WAR	Issue 148: 93%
12	↑	LOTR: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH	Issue 149: 91%
13	↓	ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: SOAKED!	Issue 158: 72%
14	↑	COMMAND AND CONQUER: GENERALS – DELUXE	Issue 127: 86%
15	↑	ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3	Issue 149: 79%
16	(RE)	WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR	Issue 147: 81%
17	↓	IMPERIAL GLORY	Issue 156: 85%
18	(RE)	PIPPA FUNNELL: THE STUD FARM INHERITANCE	Issue 155: 30%
19	NEW	CRICKET 2005	Issue 158: 62%
20	–	ZOO TYCOON 2	Issue 152: 55%



BATTLEFIELD 2
Oh *Battlefield 2*, how we love thee. How we love your ragdolls, your parachutes and fine examples of armoured machinery.



HALF-LIFE 2
Strange to think that there are those yet to appreciate City 17 and its many bullet-holes, but here's to those first experiencing its delights eh?



BRIAN LARA CRICKET
Good old Codies manage a six, a four and a googly over EA's *Cricket 2005* offering. Well done lads. Still don't quite understand the sport though.



PIPPA FUNNELL: THE STUD FARM INHERITANCE
See? Girls do like games after all! Maybe next year Daddy will splash out and buy you a real pony!



THE NEW semaphore mode is welcome, despite lack of flags.

EVOLUTION EVOLVES

www.konami.co.uk
ETA: October

Exclusive! Team *PC ZONE* get its knees muddy with *Pro Evolution Soccer 5*!

IT WAS BARELY two hours ago that *ZONE* played the latest *Pro Evolution Soccer 5* code hot from Japan and we still haven't stopped muttering about a particularly controversial penalty decision. The game, however, is as superb as expected. The main difference is that the one-on-one battles are much more intense. A player like Thierry Henry, both strong and pacy, can shrug off a defender's shirt-pulls and maraud towards goal, whereas goofy lightweight Ronaldinho can be knocked off the ball like a girl.

Players get their feet in, clip ankles and wrap their legs around you to try and nick the ball away from your feet, and if an off-the-ball incident occurs, the ref will sometimes give a drop ball for the opposition to sportingly kick back to you.

Passing now has to be more accurate, including through-balls, and one-on-ones against the goalkeeper are tougher, with the keeper covering angles and watching his area far more closely than before. Because of the heightened trickiness, the elation of scoring is even more palpable – you should have seen the scorcher that Henry put past Cech in one of the games we played. (Yes, that's right – Arsenal and Chelsea are two of ten new officially-licensed teams in the game, in addition to the Spanish, Italian and Dutch leagues.)

Also rather special are the Memorial Matches, which allow you to load in multiple option files from friends – *PES5* will recognise the stats and remember how many matches you've played against them, who has won the most games and who has scored the most goals. (Should make for some interesting office politics...) Look out for the UK's first PC review and playable demo of *PES5* in a few issues time.


MORE on-screen enemies than ever!

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

The guy who writes the music

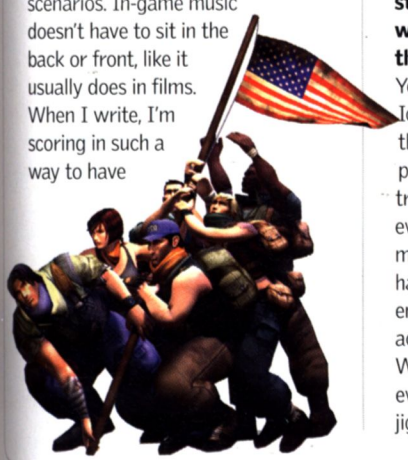
JESPER KYD – Music Composer on *Hitman: Blood Money*



After spending around five years on the music demo scene, Jesper joined his friends in forming a game company called Zyrinx and moved to the US. When this encountered difficulties many of them moved back to Denmark and formed Io Interactive. Jesper, however, stayed and launched a music studio in Manhattan. He now works from Los Angeles.

Q So how is it different writing a score for a *Hitman* game from writing one for a film or a TV programme?

A Music plays for the best part of the 10-15 hours it takes to complete a game like *Hitman: Contracts*, so instead of writing 15 hours of music, I tend to focus on music that fits several different scenarios. In-game music doesn't have to sit in the back or front, like it usually does in films. When I write, I'm scoring in such a way to have the music sit in the middle. Not background music and not extremely loud like you have in film action sequences – somewhere in the middle where it can be enjoyed while not competing with sounds and voices.

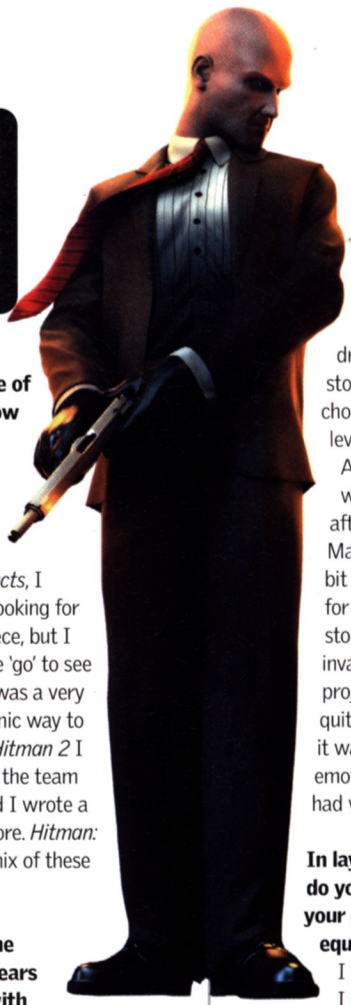


Do you have complete control over when and where the music starts or stops as the player works his way through the game?

Yes, I implement the music with the Io team in a comprehensive way so that everything the game player can possibly think of has already been tried and tested – so we have every eventuality covered while still maintaining the musical identity. I have to make sure that all the emotions the game undergoes are accompanied by music that fits. When all the music is done, we put everything together, like a huge jigsaw puzzle.

When you start composing a piece of music, do you know exactly what you want in terms of tone and style?

I write in many different ways. For *Hitman: Contracts*, I knew what I was looking for when starting a piece, but I always let the piece 'go' to see where it ended. It was a very enjoyable and organic way to write a score. For *Hitman 2* I knew exactly what the team was looking for and I wrote a more orchestral score. *Hitman: Blood Money* is a mix of these two styles.



My favourite game music of recent years is what you did with the Russian choral music in *Freedom Fighters*.

Yeah, I'd just completed *Hitman 2* for Io and we were gearing up on production for *Freedom Fighters*. This was a very cinematic action game and it needed a kind of alternative future sound to reflect the fact that events had turned out differently during the Second World War. It was also a very tragic, dramatic and emotional story and I thought the choir would add to the level of human emotion. As it turned out, I wrote the score right after 9/11 while living in Manhattan – so it was a bit surreal writing music for a game that told the story about an army invading New York. The project turned out to be quite cleansing for me and it was one of the most emotional experiences I've had writing a score...

In layman's terms, how do you go about making your music? What equipment do you use?

I use five PCs and a G5. I have about 25 hardware synths and drum machines such as Machine Drum, MPC1000, Yamaha CS80 and VL-1, Alesis Andromeda, General Midi ProMega3. I use a Bitt Tree custom-built patch bay system.

Uh, great, we love those. Thanks.

LIVING IN A MATERIAL WORLD

Selling the products that should never have been made in the first place

Some companies have got too much money, which is why they blow their marketing budgets on tat for the amusement of games journalists that should know better. We thought it was about time we gave something back, so from now on we're auctioning the stuff we get sent on eBay and giving the proceeds to charity (using the eBay tag 'pczoners'). As soon as every new issue hits the shelves, we'll be do-gooding and waiting for your bids...

Buy our tat at www.ebay.co.uk All proceeds go to charity, mate... www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org

THIS MONTH'S TAT



DAWN OF WAR LEATHER SATCHEL
Smells and looks very, very posh.



BLITZKRIEG ZIPPO LIGHTER
Starts fires with ruthless efficiency.



STOLEN MAGIC LIGHT-UP PEN
Lets you see shite games in the dark.



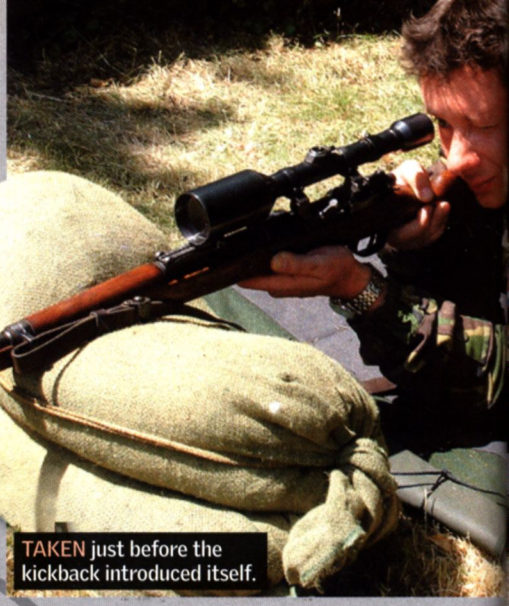
CITY OF HEROES POSTER
Super-fly *City Of Heroes* mega-poster.

THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
✔	**HALF-LIFE 2 T-SHIRT** In the customary 'large' size, completely unworn and maybe even touched by Gordon Freeman himself.	£10.50	7
✔	**AGE OF EMPIRES III SHOT GLASS** Complete with funny doofer in the bottom that keeps it cold when it's been in the freezer.	£8.50	30
✔	**GTA: SAN ANDREAS BANDANNA** As modelled here by one cool character, it lets you be a gangsta for life.	£5.60	6
✔	**DUNGEON SIEGE: THE BATTLE FOR ARANNA COMIC** Oppressed peasants, men in armour and evil-doers with names like Zaramoth all included.	£1.70	5


TANKS: not easily sniped.


NICE legs.


TAKEN just before the kickback introduced itself.

REALITY CHECK

SNIPER ELITE

Steve Hill sets his sights on sniping

DEVELOPER Rebellion **PUBLISHER** Ubisoft **WEBSITE** www.rebellion.co.uk

I'M IN A FIELD near Ipswich surrounded by cold-blooded killers. It's just over an hour out of London, but it might as well be another century. As the identikit short angry man announces at the briefing: "We don't do political correctness." They certainly don't, and over the course of the day we're subjected to concepts and language rarely heard outside the confines of a '70s sitcom.

It's the usual scenario: a bunch of ex-army sorts running corporate days for people who like to fire guns but aren't keen on the whole blood and death aspect. As the man says: "Don't ask us how many people we've killed and don't ask us what it's like to take a human life."

It's advice that we strictly adhere to, but it's clear that pretty much everyone involved has seen action. Even the old duffer at the gun club tells a story of shooting an Egyptian policeman in the head. Probably the only one without (human) blood on their hands is the farmer's wife who knocks up a beef stew while we await our turn at the firing range.

Ostensibly, we're here to recreate the action of *Sniper Elite*, the Rebellion-developed title recently snapped up by Ubisoft. The game is set during the final Soviet advance of Berlin during World War II, but we're going to have to settle for Suffolk.

SHOT BY BOTH SIDES

The rifles are at least authentic, and first up is a Russian affair, which despite being around 100-years-old, apparently may have been used in World War II. We're shooting at a regulation target, informally known as the Hun's Head, with the prime area marked by a circle in the middle of his face. As the instructor casually announces: "Any lower and you'll probably just take his jaw off."

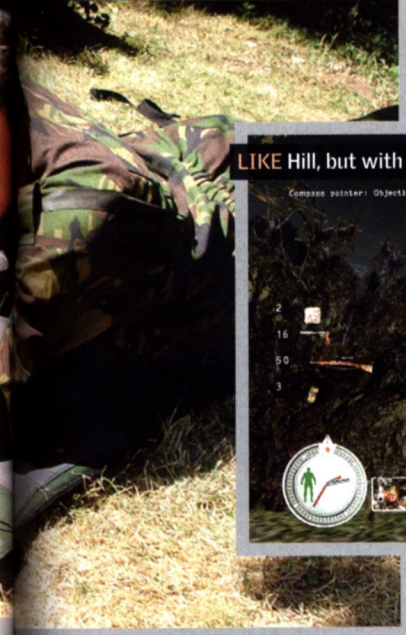
The rifle is an impressive piece of kit and one that requires you to lay flat on your stomach to operate it. The bullets are vicious-looking projectiles and six of them are loaded into the chamber. The sights provide a crisp view of the Hun's Head, albeit one that's swaying gently in time with my breathing. As in *Sniper Elite*, this is prevented by using the empty lung technique whereby you breathe out (or in) and hold it for no more than about six seconds, after which time you may start shaking through lack of oxygen. It seems effective enough, so I squeeze the trigger, unleashing a suitably loud crack – even with earplugs – as the kickback thuds against my shoulder (already shattered by a previous Reality Check, as you'll know if you're a regular reader...)

Once the first shot is out of the way, it's pretty straightforward, the biggest difficulty being cocking the gun, with my chocolate-wristed efforts looked on with barely concealed contempt by the accompanying action-man. My eye would appear to be in though, and five out of the six shots rip through the Hun's Head. Only one is in the sweet spot, but with hits to the cheek, mouth, chin and neck, suffice to say he won't be getting up.

Moving on to the German rifle, it's a similar set-up, if with slightly bigger



ETA Sept 05





LIKE Hill, but with more polygons.


"AARRGGHH!" etc.


LEFT a bit, right a bit...

sights, something I discover when the kickback causes the mounting to crack me above the eye for the latest in a long-running series of Reality Check-related injuries. It doesn't deter me from the job in hand though, and with four of the six shots within the target area, I'm confident in awarding myself a set of sniping wings to add to the collection.

AIMED AT YOUR TEMPLES

All well and good (not for the Hun), but the art of sniping involves much more than aiming and pulling the trigger. Present on the day is *Sniper Elite* advisor Martin Pegler, author of *Out Of Nowhere: A History Of The Military Sniper*. We have to confess to not reading the whole book, but among the key skills identified are good concealment and observation. After wolfing down the beef stew (and forgoing the apple pie), we're bundled into a bus to embark on an exercise that will demonstrate these factors.

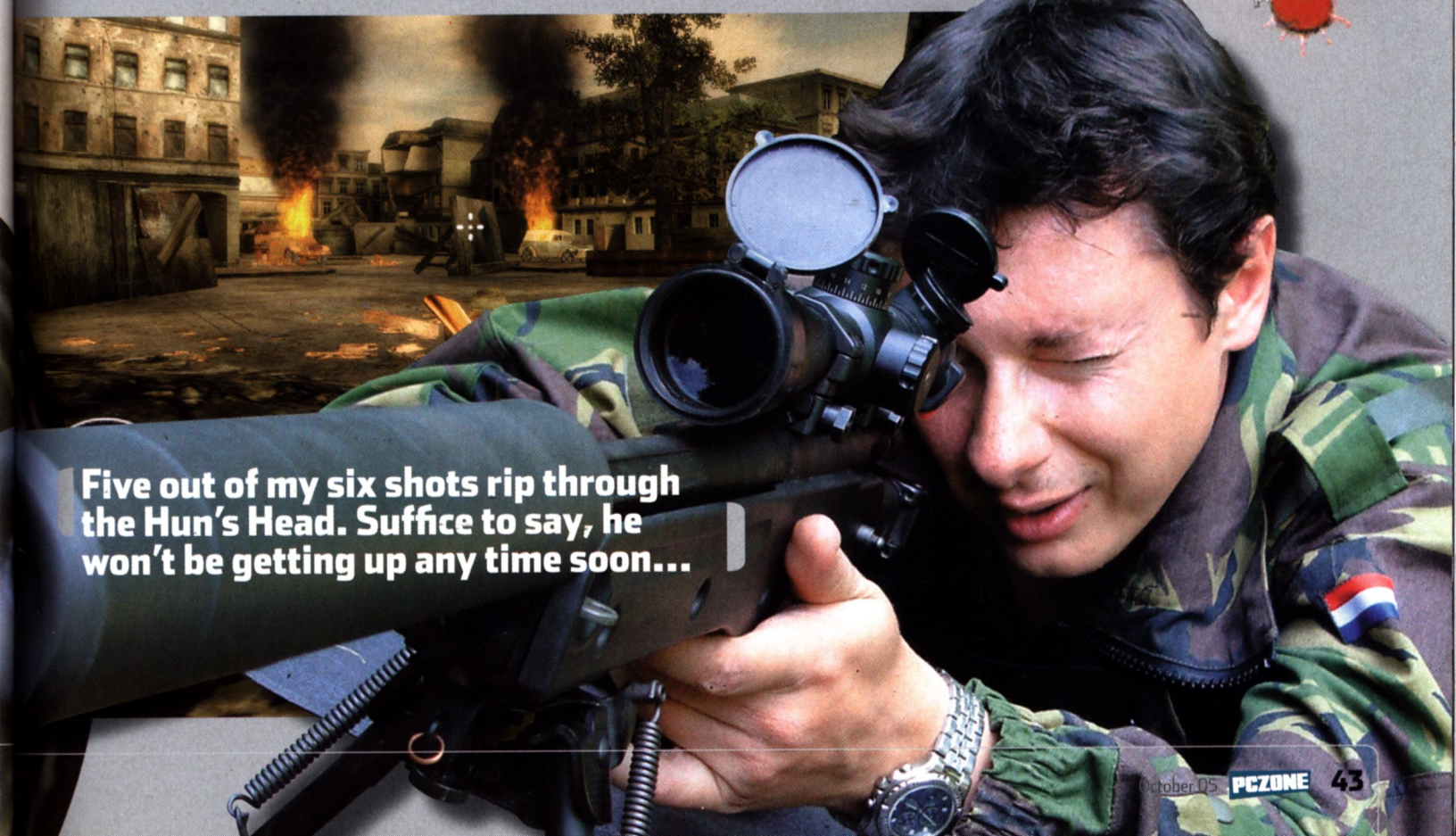
Concealment first, which involves smearing viscous make-up on my face, the fearsome look completed by a glorified hairnet. For observation, I'm flanked by a pair of binocular-wielding wingmen. Meanwhile, I have the task of hauling the sniper rifle through the undergrowth, loaded with a couple of blanks.

For the purpose of the exercise, a 'German' is situated atop a nearby tower, and our task is to take him out without being spotted. If he sees us, he radios a nearby helper who signals our demise with a tap of the shoulder. Setting off with minor enthusiasm, crawling through nettles on your belly is about as much fun as it sounds. Avoiding pools of light and sudden movement is key, and we crawl from tree to tree until we finally have him within range. Raising the increasingly heavy gun to my eye, I have the Hun's Head in my view, give or take a bit of shrubbery. Breathing in to steady myself, I'm about to squeeze the trigger when I feel a heartless hand on my shoulder. For me, the war is over... PCZ

HOW REAL IS... SNIPER ELITE?

In developing a game based specifically around sniping, Rebellion has opted for an extremely authentic approach. Various factors have to be taken into account before taking a shot and the path of the bullet is affected by both wind and gravity. As such, you'll often have to aim a couple of notches above your target to compensate for how much the bullet will drop during flight. Likewise for wind, depending on strength and direction, and how far the target is away, you may have to adjust your shot. Furthermore, your ability to fire is affected by your heart rate and you can also use the empty lung technique to stop your breathing from ruining your shot. *Sniper Elite* also takes into account concealment factors, and your degree of camouflage is shown as a percentage. You also get a pair of binoculars to scout for your enemy. No make-up though.

PCZONE 4/5



Five out of my six shots rip through the Hun's Head. Suffice to say, he won't be getting up any time soon...



THE GODFATHER

DEVELOPER EA Redwood Shores
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE www.eagames.com/official/godfather/godfather/us
ETA Early 2006

SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS

DEVELOPER Radical Games
PUBLISHER VU Games
WEBSITE www.scarfacegame.com
ETA January 2006

Should we be concerned about the impending gaming re-imaginations of two of the greatest films of all time? *Mike Anderiesz* pretends he's never played *Grand Theft Auto*...

GANGSTER NO.1

WISE MEN HAVE often claimed that great books rarely make great movies; now even wiser men (well, us anyway) are revisiting the question of whether a great movie can ever be translated into a great (or even a 'not shit') videogame.

To date, the evidence has been somewhat one-sided. Although we reckon *Peter Jackson's King Kong* could be a cracker, who could forget the wretched sight of *Platoon* – not only limping into view a full six years late but also managing to turn a complex anti-war movie into a bog-standard RTS? Novalogic's *Black Hawk Down* fared somewhat better, although the tacked-on mission where you got to take out warlord General Adid (whose real-life demise had nothing to do with America) seemed to take an already gung-ho movie into disrespectful territory. And of course there are all the rushed tie-ins that seem designed purely to foist packets of badly animated fighting onto an unsuspecting populace: *X2: Wolverine's Revenge*, *Enter The Matrix*, *Terminator 3: War Of The Machines*, we're looking at you.

Such examples have important lessons for EA and VU, about to retread even more hallowed ground with *The Godfather* and *Scarface: The World Is Yours* respectively. Both games have recently slipped, and are now slated to go head-to-head in early 2006. With this in mind, we tracked down both developers to see how they were coping with their retrospective re-imaginations – keeping gamers, movie fans and, er, movie directors happy...

Who could forget *Platoon*, limping into view six years late and turning a complex anti-war movie into a bog-standard RTS?



LOOKS like a nice holiday spot.

THE GODFATHER

(EA/EA REDWOOD SHORES STUDIO)

Tale of the Tape

How do the games stack up to the films? Let's take a quick look...

THE GODFATHER | SCARFACE: TWIY

A-List actors

Duvall. Caan. Brando did the recording but may be replaced.

Woods, York, Pacino (well, he signed the contract, anyway).

Best bit from movie known to be in game

The hit on Sonny at the tollbooth. Did you know that Robert De Niro originally screen-tested for Sonny, before appearing as the younger Vito Corleone in *The Godfather Part II*?

The Mansion shoot-out. In the movie Tony either dies or suddenly finds something deeply interesting at the bottom of the fountain. In the game, your shooting skills might yet save him...

Any problems...?

Francis Ford Coppola, Al Pacino – neither is talking to EA at present.

The city of Miami – reputedly not happy to be depicted yet again as the drugs capital of the free world in both this and the imminent *Miami Vice* movie.

What we want to see

1940's New York with all of the atmosphere. Gun-toting mobsters, cool cars, great acting and deep strategy – basically, we want it to be better than *Mafia*.

Drive-by shootings where pretty girls get needlessly caught in the crossfire. And Tony saying: "Well look at you now, you stupid fock!" as often as possible.

What we don't want to see

You mincing around with a Tommy gun trying in vain to target enemies, while Don Corleone gets comically wedged half in/half out of a fruit stand.

The return of Tony's sister. Frankly, nothing that hairy deserves to live without going through quarantine first.

THE FIRST TWO *Godfather* films sit atop the tallest of the celluloid trees, so it's no small task for EA Redwood Shores, the in-house studio previously involved with the *Tiger Woods* and *James Bond* franchises, to convert it into 3D accelerated form.

So has EA noticed just how much *GTA* sells and it now wants a piece of the action? Were horses' heads left on pillows until developers got the picture? David De Martini, the game's executive producer, claims it was nothing so sinister.

"When you look at *The Godfather*, there's only about ten action-oriented sequences in it. So the approach we agreed with Paramount was that we wanted to create *The Godfather* living world, not necessarily a 'movie game'. You're handed very specific moments from the film, so we'll intersect and wrap around *The Godfather* story, both the movie and book."

Such lineage gives you some impressive co-stars, namely Robert Duvall, James Caan and the late Marlon Brando, who lent their likenesses and recorded dialogue for the game – although Brando was so ill, he may now be replaced with a voice actor. Frankly, sticking Michael Ironside or David Duchovny on the box and claiming you've got an all-star cast doesn't have quite the same impact.

"If you think of the most familiar scenes from the film, they'll be there, but presented to you in an organic way," enthuses De Martini. "So, you're not going to be able to select a Horse's Head mission, but you will be involved in the horse's head activity.

"You start the game as one of the Corleone children, so there's a lot of pre- and post-story surrounding scenes in the movie that you get the opportunity to play out. So when Sonny (Caan) gets shot, you won't be able to stop that, but there were things leading up to it that are alluded to in the book but not the movie... These are the kinds of activities you'll be involved in."

However, respect and revenge were arguably only a small part of the film's power. Far more important was Michael Corleone's conversion from blue-eyed war hero to ice-cold gangster. Was all this lost when Al Pacino refused to be featured? (The Michael character remains, but looks and sounds different.)

"We didn't get his likeness," concedes De Martini. "We got every other actor and it's hard to say why Pacino didn't want to do a deal. However, we've associated some of those characteristics with your character, who parallels the path of Michael to some degree – you experience betrayal and loss too."

Chin-stroking industry watchers like what we are, meanwhile, might wonder if Pacino's refusal to take part was more to do with the upcoming *Scarface* game – to which he most definitely has lent his likeness...

However, as far as *Godfather* action is concerned there's plenty of it, and on two strategic levels. The Open World game has nine tough neighbourhoods to control, five warring families and 200 interactive building locations – often housing some racket or other for you to disrupt or take over with characteristic *GTA* stylings. Above this, meanwhile, lies a *Risk*-style strategy game where you try to weaken the other families block by block.

"It's your job to gain respect, money and territory – there's always a dominant family in every neighbourhood and when you've taken over all their businesses, only then will it become Corleone. As you take over these interactive spaces, you weaken these families and can then go after their borough strongholds such as New Jersey and Brooklyn."

Despite real, valid efforts to keep the game within the rich backdrop of the *Godfather* movies, the nature of mass-market gaming will inevitably clash with those who know the value of celluloid. Since we've played *Mafia* though, we know that subtle and intelligent treatments of organised crime are possible. It appears this is the direction EA is heading towards, rather than a bland exploit 'em up. Here's hoping.

Apocalypse Now

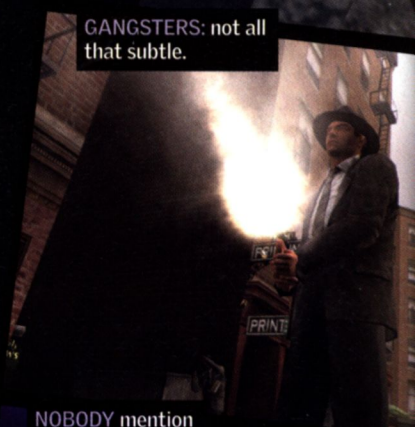
Who wouldn't love *The Godfather*?



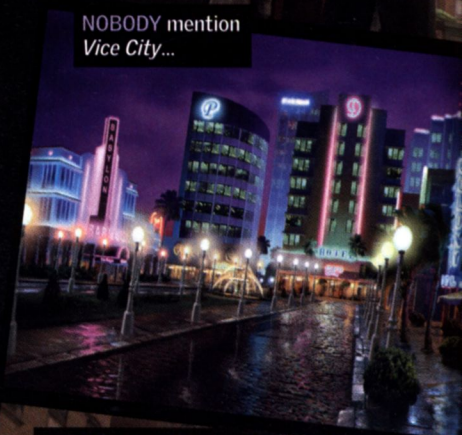
Enter Francis Ford Coppola; director of *Apocalypse Now* and, of course, *The Godfather* trilogy. Having stayed silent through the February launch, Coppola popped up in mid-April on a Saturday morning TV show to call the game a 'misuse of film' and claimed: "I knew nothing about it. They never asked me if I thought it was a good idea."

He went on to damn preview code he'd seen: "They use the characters everyone knows, hire those actors to be there and then introduce very minor characters. And then for the next hour they shoot and kill each other."

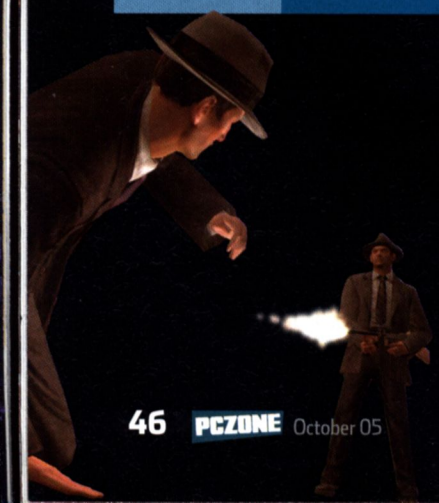
EA responded: "We met with Francis Coppola last year and although the meeting was productive, he didn't have any interest in participating." *The Godfather's* executive producer David De Martini also takes issue with the substance of his grievance. "Violence was what this world was about. We stick to the core principles of the book and film, and the violence is appropriate to the situation. Working on something like this is never easy, but we hope people give it the same chance they gave Puzo or Coppola."



GANGSTERS: not all that subtle.



NOBODY mention *Vice City*...





"MINICAB? Minicab, sir?"



GANGSTER NO.1

SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS

(VU/RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT)



FROM floating in a fountain to sunning yourself in the Caribbean.

Miami Nice...

Tony Montana? Dead? Oh no, no no...



"SAY it! S1m0ne *was* a good film!"

Scarface: TWIY will pack over 140 missions, from the side-quests that gain you Respect (the game's real currency) to the story-led missions that advance the ongoing feud against Sosa (the rival drug baron).

"Tony escapes to the islands," explains producer Cam Weber. "He heals and vows to get everything back and get revenge on Sosa. Three months later, he's back in Miami looking for his lawyer, who gives you the chance to do a hit for one of his friends. This gets you involved with a dealer who wants you to do a cocaine deal – and once you have the coke, you have to distribute it. There's also cash to be laundered, so you'll need storefronts, banks or warehouses..." (*Or ice-cream vans to sell drugs from? Or a porn studio? Is someone writing this down? –Ed*)

ON PAPER AT least, *Scarface* lends itself better to a digital makeover than *The Godfather*. Brian De Palma's movie was riddled with guns, drugs, fast cars and '80s music, along with the kind of dialogue that inspired a generation of gangsta rappers. And wouldn't you know it, so was *GTA: Vice City*. Coincidence? We think not. Even 20 years on, the film is still hot property.

"We've got a big team at Radical, made up of a bunch of different people from different studios," explains Cam Weber, producer on *Scarface*. "Some were on *The Simpsons* titles, some on *007: Agent Under Fire* and a couple were over at Dynamix doing *Tribes 2*. We were working on an original property but in the end VU liked the technology we'd built and so hired us to do *Scarface*."

Fortunately, Radical has one immediate advantage over EA: it's making a sequel. You read that right, it's a sequel. One in which Tony Montana is alive, and not at all stone-cold dead in a posh paddling pool. Not even a tiny bit. VU and Radical have taken the script and ripped out the last page. In the film, Tony Montana was first sprayed with semi-automatic gunfire, blasted in the spine with a pump-action shotgun before finally falling 20ft into a concrete fountain with little bits of cocaine dribbling out of his nostrils... The game is quite a bit different.

Another thing *Scarface: TWIY* has that *The Godfather* conspicuously doesn't is Pacino himself. Admittedly, he doesn't say Tony Montana's lines, but he apparently did pick out his own soundalike from a gaggle of 70 Tony-impersonators.

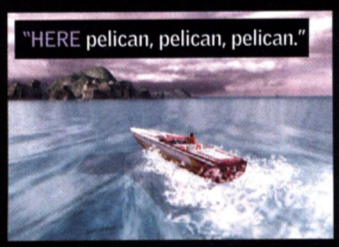
"Pacino approved a lot of things," recalls Weber. "His digital likeness, the choice of actor to play him. We've got 30,000 lines of dialogue in the game – that's 10-15 days of solid studio work just for Tony's character. It simply didn't make sense to have Pacino doing it. But we've got new dialogue from Robert Loggia (Frank Lopez in the movie, now the game's narrator), and Stephen Bauer (Tony's compadre, Manny), as well as new characters played by James Woods, Michael York and Cheech & Chong."

But surely what Coppola said about games trivialising their subject applies equally well to this game – what, for instance, of the movie's underlying anti-drugs message? Remember that Tony's sister gets riddled with bullets because his nose is buried in a pile of coke so big he can't see the approaching gunman. It may not be a subtle message, yet Weber acknowledges that little of it will make it to his finished game.

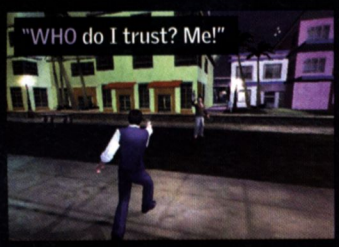
"While cocaine is everywhere, it's not a gameplay feature and the anti-drug message isn't a main theme. We do keep a lot of the themes from the movie going though, such as Tony's sense of family and his moral code. He's not a generic thug, so you can't just mow down a bunch of pedestrians – Tony won't let you do that. We had to work around things like that to satisfy the licence owners..."

It's a nice try, but we've seen in-game morality before and it's usually the least important of the RPG stats. Radical will be counting on its acting talent and a script by David McKenna (writer of *Blow*) to influence the mood. This won't appease the nay-sayers with its reformulation of the film's tragic denouement. In this respect, *The Godfather* almost certainly has the edge. But what does Oliver Stone, famously opinionated writer of the original *Scarface* make of it?

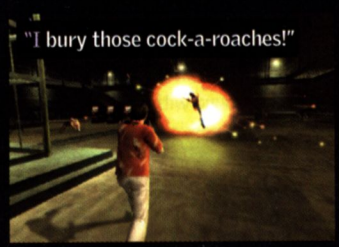
"Stone chose not to be involved..." concludes Weber with barely concealed relief. "He was offered involvement and he turned it down. We're fine with that, really..."



"HERE pelican, pelican, pelican."

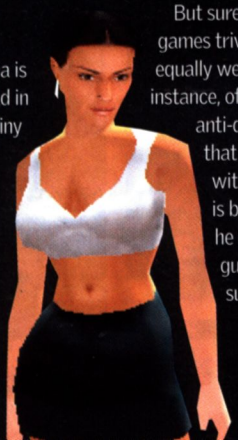


"WHO do I trust? Me!"



"I bury those cock-a-roaches!"

In the film, Tony fell 20ft into a concrete fountain, cocaine dribbling from his nostrils. The game is very different...



CONCLUSION **With two movie classics reaching the PC around the same time, comparisons are inevitable. Both are based on material that was considered shocking in its day, both rely on action missions interspersed with respect/empire-building activities, both tried and failed to recruit the movie's original driving force (Coppola and Stone respectively) and both have somehow stumbled on a copy of *GTA* for their motivation. With the kind of money EA and VU are pumping in, we're expecting high production values, but will it be a worthy addition to the multi-layered tales of Corleone and Montana? A few horses are starting to look a bit nervous on that count...** PCZ


"CAN'T find his wallet anywhere..."


BEWARE the penis-headed beast of doom.

IT became clear that the estate agent was a liar...

INDUSTRIAL FIGHT AND MAGIC

www.ubisoft.com
ETA: Summer 2006

Dark Messiah rises for an assault on the RPG crown

YOU CAN'T REALLY say that the *Heroes Of Might & Magic* series has ever stirred the loins of the red-blooded gamer. Yes, it's provided turn-based frivolity for our European friends, but it's never exactly rolled around with us in the hay and shown us passion like that of the very gods. Until now, that is.

Pray silence then for *Dark Messiah*, a fantastical offering from the Source engine that's heavy on the action and orc decapitation. A lighter game, in treatment rather than tone, than *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* perhaps – but we've seen both arrows being fired into goblins' heads and melee action with all manner of swords and maces, and it's meaty as hell.

Obviously, the storyline is generic bumf about prophecies, wizards and newly trained chosen ones – but the *Might & Magic* universe is already ten games and expansions deep, and there's a hell of a lot to draw from for *Dark Messiah*'s 12 goliath levels. Will it truly be a dark messiah, or just a very naughty boy? We'll see when it's released next summer.

DON'T fancy yours much.


STUNNING views. Slight goblin infestation.


NIGEL'S halitosis was getting out of hand.

Look! Real Girls!

www.questforantonia.com

"I'm Miss *EverQuest II*, and I want peace throughout all Norrath and to heal all slayed rats"



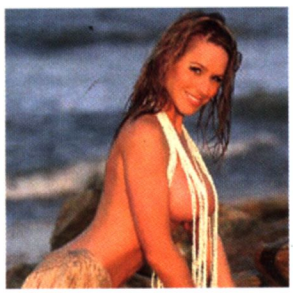




BY NOW WE all realise that MMOG players aren't (all) sweaty-palmed loners. Indeed, the mocking of *EverQuest* ceased being funny all of two years ago. Unfortunately, no-one appears to have informed Sony Online about this – who remain ever-diligent in bringing out promotions through which their own beloved players can be mocked and belittled by lazy journalists.

The latest is the 'Quest for Antonia' – a search for a real-world model who looks just like the Heather Graham-voiced Antonia Bayle out of *EverQuest II*. In-game Antonia is apparently "a formidable ruler who's earned the respect of those around her by being that rare combination of idealist and pragmatist" – although even-handed commentators would also point out that much of her appeal lies in her wazzo pair of jugs.

And so it is that five lucky ladies have made it through a gruelling voting process and into a final that involves a mock photo-shoot, swimsuit competitions and an interview. "Antonia gets to wear sexy, skimpy outfits which is one of my favourite pastimes," lied one harlot. Makes you feel proud to be a gamer doesn't it?







PLAY MYST-V FOR ME

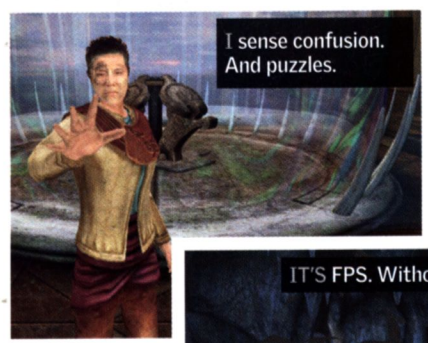
www.mystvgame.com
ETA: Autumn

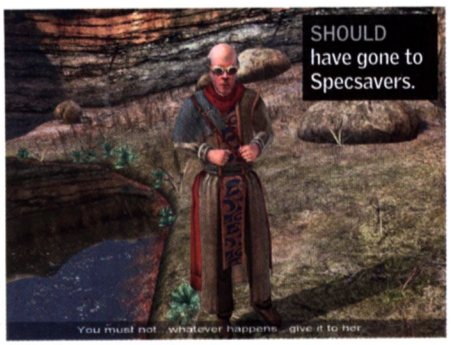
Confused and hurriedly written postcards arrive from a correspondent lost somewhere in *Myst V: End Of Ages*

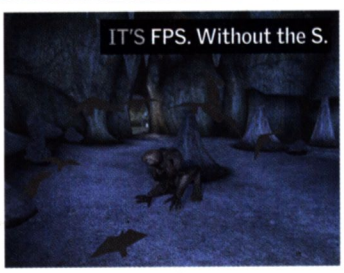
SO HERE WE are with the last of the *Myst* games. The grand finale. To avoid distressing *Myst* fans we're under strict orders not to reveal any endings or one of the later 'Ages' – although seeing as we spent a whole ten minutes stuck in the opening room until we finally realised that one of the doors had a handle, there's not much fear of that.

Now with first-person WASD refinements (or screen-by-screen mouse clickery should you wish), *End Of Ages* will see you finally deciding the fate of the D'ni. Or, as was the case with us, it will have you being really confused, picking up dozens of diagrams of complicated cog puzzles and having a funny woman repeatedly telling you not to give her a tablet.

It's true that *Myst V* is like a dream conjured up by chugging a gallon of Philadelphia soft cheese before bedtime, but even the casual observer will admit that there's a bizarre grandeur to proceedings. Vast pits with lifts in, earthquakes in volcanic craters and strange creatures that stare at you before scampering away – it's an odd mixture, but one that's been proved to work before. Is this really the last of the *Myst* games? Whatever, we'll have the exclusive review and demo next month.











BAD MOJO
The actions you perform and the things you teach your creature affect its moral alignment right down to a physical level. This ill-tempered ape looks as rough as sandpaper – that's what unbridled rage does to a monkey.

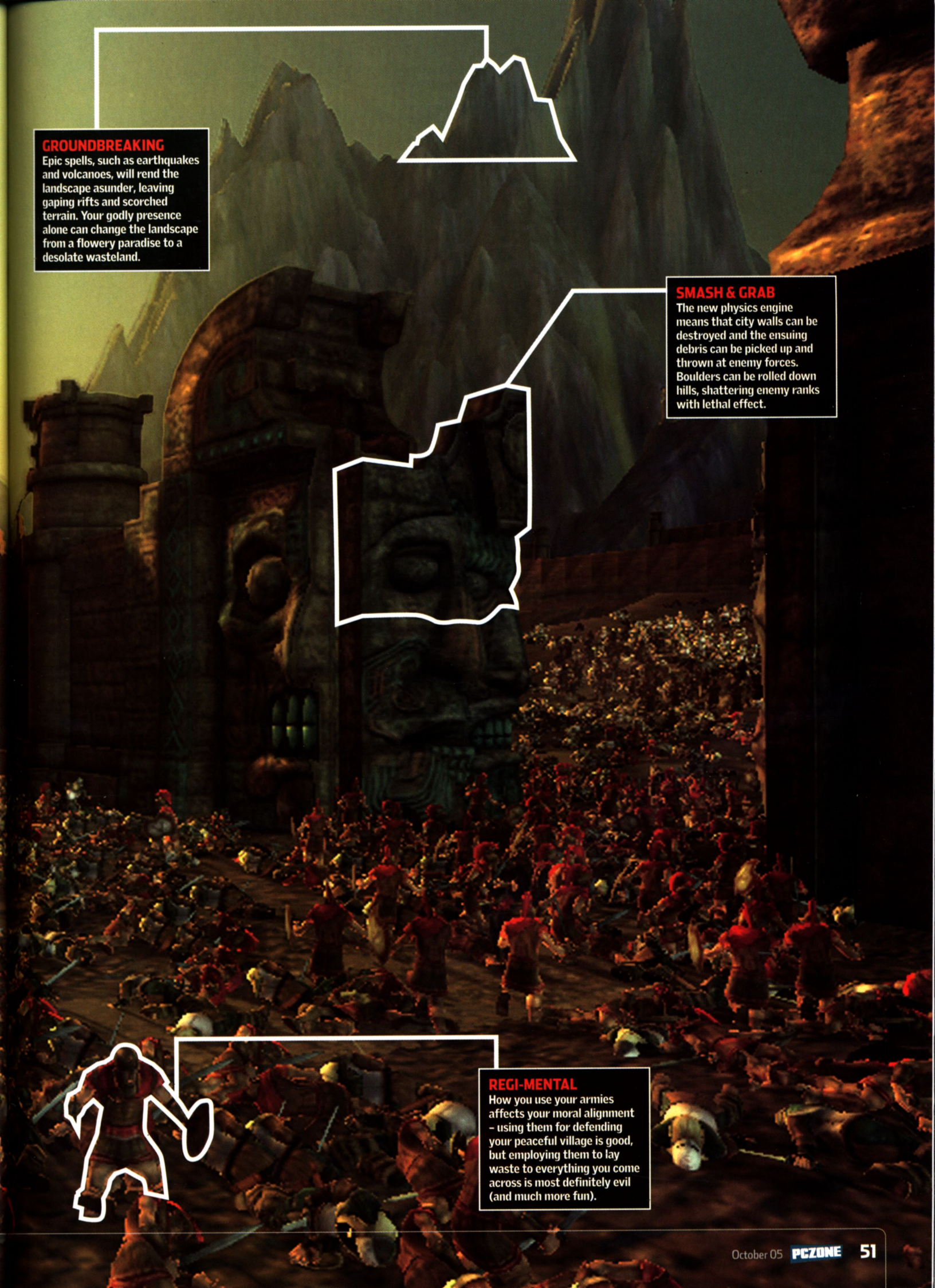
APE ESCAPE
The improved AI allows creatures to perform a vast range of tasks, from playfully tossing you a ball or carrying food to your village to pummelling enemy soldiers into the ground or hurling trees at buildings.

HOT SHOT

BLACK & WHITE 2

DEVELOPER Lionhead Studios **PUBLISHER** EA
WEBSITE www.lionhead.com/bw2 **ETA** October

SIR PETE'S LATEST creation is shaping up to be exactly what he'd hoped *Black & White* would be. He's admitted the original had its shortcomings, but it's looking increasingly like *B&W2* won't merely rectify the problems of the first game, but supersede it in every way. For visceral proof, just look at the fur on this grumpy monkey. If we're being brutally honest we're still not entirely sure about the new RTS angles, since the simplified army controls may have difficulty engendering any deeply strategic battling. But with nifty physics, hugely improved creature AI and screenshots this bloody beautiful, we could be on the verge of something miraculous.



GROUNDBREAKING
Epic spells, such as earthquakes and volcanoes, will rend the landscape asunder, leaving gaping rifts and scorched terrain. Your godly presence alone can change the landscape from a flowery paradise to a desolate wasteland.

SMASH & GRAB
The new physics engine means that city walls can be destroyed and the ensuing debris can be picked up and thrown at enemy forces. Boulders can be rolled down hills, shattering enemy ranks with lethal effect.

REGI-MENTAL
How you use your armies affects your moral alignment – using them for defending your peaceful village is good, but employing them to lay waste to everything you come across is most definitely evil (and much more fun).

COMING SOON...

COMPARE this to the ship at the start of *Morrowind*. We've come a long way...

ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Sam Kieldsen explores the swamps of Maryland in search of this year's hottest RPG

DEVELOPER Bethesda Softworks **PUBLISHER** 2K Games **WEBSITE** www.elderscrolls.com **PREVIOUSLY IN...** Issue 158

THE LOWDOWN

- Classic open-ended gameplay ✓
- Revamped combat ✓
- Incredible AI system ✓
- Cutting edge visuals and physics ✓
- Over 1,000 NPCs, all voiced ✓

ETA Xmas 05



MARYLAND MIGHT NOT be among the most exciting of US states, and Rockville might not be the most exciting of Maryland cities, but once the gruff Yorkshire tones of our glorious new editor had informed me that I would be flying there forthwith, the passport and travel plug were being dusted off within minutes. The reason? Rockville is the home of Bethesda Softworks, and *PC ZONE* would be dropping by the company's top secret underground lair to take an exclusive peek at *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*.

Now only a few short months from its Christmas release date, *Oblivion* is rapidly taking shape. With content pretty much complete, Bethesda has only to apply the final layers of polish and iron out any remaining bugs. According to producer Ashley Cheng, "there's always a point in development where you have to stop making a game, so that you can start playing it." And that's where the team is now. Ashley says that one could now pop into the studio, "hop on a machine, create a character and play through the entire game from beginning to end. It won't be balanced, but all the elements are there."

HORSES FOR COURSES

If you've read our recent previews on *Oblivion*, you'll know about its hugely impressive Radiant AI system, its incredibly lifelike forests, its advanced visual effects and physics and the fact that the tens of thousands of lines of dialogue are all voiced. Oh, and the horses – we can't forget the horses.

We saw all these elements again during a real-time demo run by executive producer Todd Howard, but we also got the chance to look at some new stuff, as well as wander the dark, labyrinthine dungeon that Bethesda calls home, and

DUNGEON DELVING...

Going underground and over-ground in *Elder Scrolls IV*. Wandering free, making good use of things you find, etc.



THERE are more than 200 dungeons in *Oblivion*, each filled with nasties, traps and treasure.



USE the revamped stealth system to sneak past enemies, or turn their own traps against them.



OR simply wade in with cold steel and smack your opponents about using the new combat system.



NORTHERN Cyrodiil is snowy and mountainous.

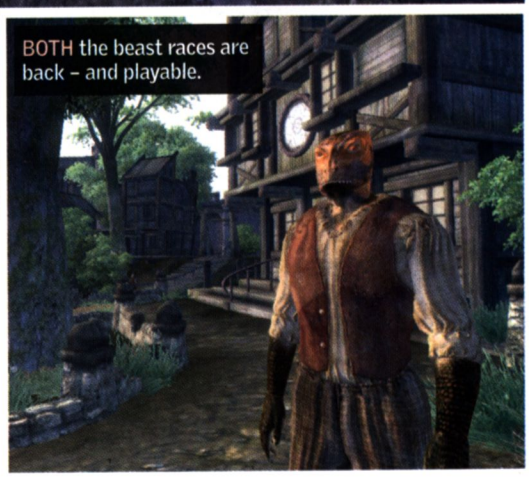
chat to members of the team.

After the demo, Howard throws on the latest build of the game and whizzes us through various environments (there will be plains, swamps, scrubland and mountains as well as forests), shows off weapons and armour and even the inside of a cell after getting arrested. Unlike *Morrowind*, jail is now interactive. You can serve out your time, or try to escape. "You can try to pick the lock. You can pick the guard's pocket when he walks by," says Howard. You can even attack your cellmate and overpower the guard when he comes to investigate the commotion.

BAD TO THE BONE

In fact, there'll be plenty of room for nastiness in *Oblivion*, despite the main quest being a 'save the world' type deal. "There's some evil stuff in the game, because a lot of people want to role-play evil." And what could be more evil than becoming an assassin in the Dark Brotherhood,

There'll be plenty of room for nastiness in *Oblivion*, despite the main quest being a 'save the world' type deal

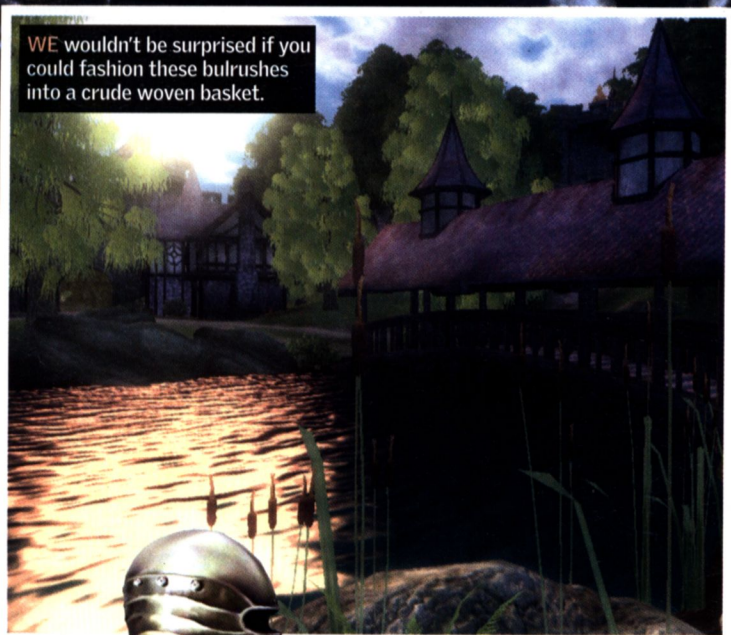


BOTH the beast races are back – and playable.

SORRY love, I like a bit of meat on me bones.



WE wouldn't be surprised if you could fashion these bulrushes into a crude woven basket.





one of five joinable factions in *Oblivion*?

"Each of the factions is like a role-playing game on its own," Howard continues. "With the Mages' Guild, you have to learn all the schools of magic from all the various cities, then you gain entrance to the Arcane University in the Imperial City. You can't make spells or magic items until you do that. It's a bit Harry Potter-ish. It really feels like a wizard's journey."

Later, character artist Christiane Meister shows off the flexible face builder used in character creation. The ten playable races from *Morrowind* remain, and each has a basic face that can be aged, stretched and otherwise altered to provide a unique mug for your in-game persona. Add in the hair editor (no, really) and the possibilities become endless. "You could spend all day on just one face if you wanted," says Christiane. "And believe me, Todd has spent all day playing around with faces," she adds with a chuckle. Needless to say, all faces have animations for speaking and displaying emotions.

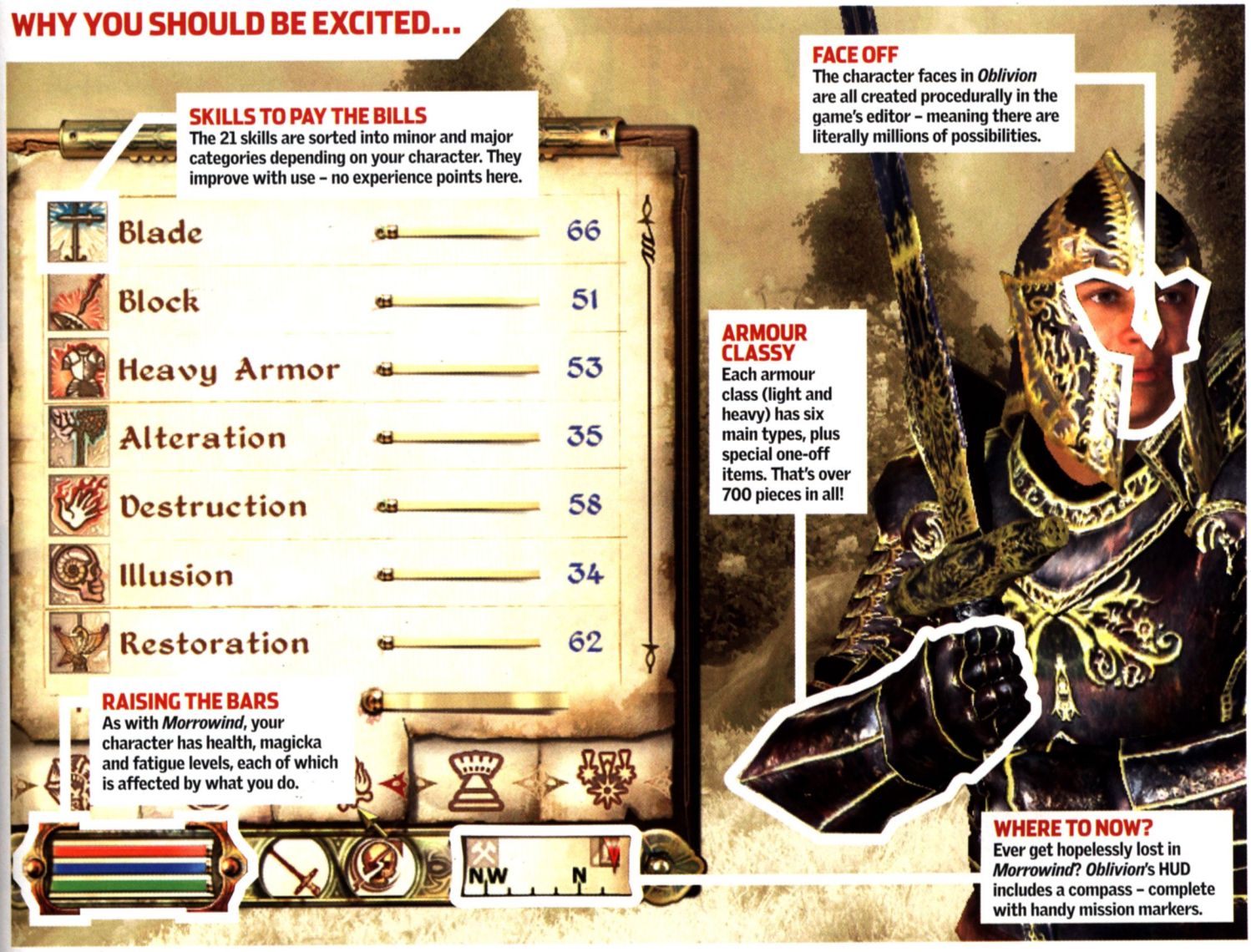
WANNA FIGHT?

Combat has also undergone a thorough re-jigging – programmer Steve Meister takes us through the changes to the enemy AI in detail. "The biggest change is we have something called a combat style: a collection of settings that dictates how an NPC or a creature fights. It works in conjunction with their skills and AI settings – things like aggression, confidence, their disposition towards their opponent – to decide how often they attack, how often they block, how much they move, where they're going to stand when they're shooting arrows or ranged spells."

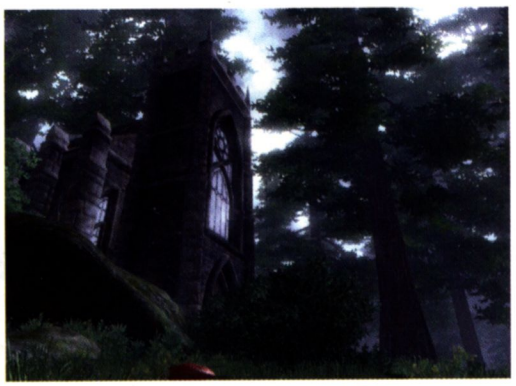
The same power attacks and 'perks' available to the player are available to the AI, including such things as the ability to disarm, paralyse and knock down opponents. Some enemies will yield after taking a beating (this can be accepted or rejected), while others head for the hills at the first sign of combat. If a weapon is lying nearby, they might pick it up and return. We're rapidly running out of space here, and yet we've barely touched upon the amount of cool, scary and downright impressive things we saw during our visit to Bethesda. We haven't mentioned vampires (you can become one, and this time you'll be able to continue playing missions as a bloodsucker), the voice actors (some big names here, as well as Patrick Stewart), the houses that can be bought in each city and the items that let you resurrect dead foes as mindless personal bodyguards.

To put it simply, there's content and gameplay galore. If any other developer was in charge this would be a cause for concern (see *Boiling Point*) – but Bethesda has pulled it off before, and looks like it's ready to do it again. It won't be long till we find out. PCZ

WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...







Some enemies will yield after taking a beating, while others will head for the hills at the first sign of combat

SOMETIMES *Oblivion* looks like a fine day in Hampshire, sometimes like the very pits of Hell.





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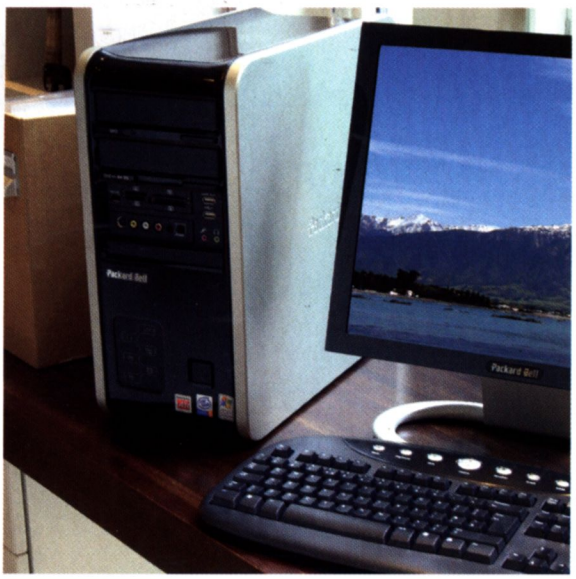
magazine

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Making the most of your PC...







...and your digital lifestyle

Inspiration
What you can do

Practical Knowledge
How to do it

Buying Advice
What you need to do it



Issue 1 in store at PC World from 26 Aug



PCZONE

REVIEWS

Getting away with PC gaming murder

SECTION EDITOR Paul Presley

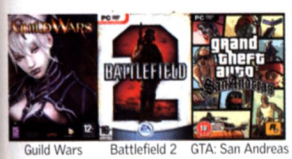
All change

ANYWAY, ONE OF the reasons why grinding is essential to MMO gaming is... what? What do you mean wrong section? Wait, where am I? What's going on? This isn't Online Zone. Last I remember is a crash at the French windows, being bundled into a sack, then several hours of sweet, blessed sleep and now I find myself in a strange new world with strange new graphics and strange new games. Well really. When you can no longer trust the chloroform-soaked-handkerchief-bearing intruders of life, what is the world coming to?

So then, reviews is it? Let's see. If we're going to do this, then we do it right. As my Great Auntie Mabel was prone to quoting shortly before the nightly medication kicked in, "never push a Spaniard from a south-facing bridge, and always kick off a new reviews section with a world exclusive." So how about *Dungeon Siege II* for your openers? I know, I know. We started the last major *PC ZONE* redesign with *Dungeon Siege*, so why not let history come full circle, eh? Then how about completing the double whammy with *Fahrenheit*, hmm? One of the strongest stories ever seen in a game? So much for your so-called summer drought. Pimms, anyone?

Must Buys!

***PC ZONE* Classics are rare beasts, indeed. These are our personal top tips for sheer gaming excellence...**



Guild Wars | Battlefield 2 | GTA: San Andreas



FREEZE! On the run for a crime you certainly did commit. Or didn't. Who knows for sure?

GAME OF THE MONTH

68 FAHRENHEIT

It isn't easy being a cop

The PC ZONE Awards



CLASSIC (90%+)
The best games ever. If you're lucky enough to see one, stop and buy it.



RECOMMENDED (75-89%)
Pretty, pretty, pretty. Any game that turns *ZONE*'s head is worthy of your love.



DUMP (0-19%)
Don't shirk your duty – it's the only responsible thing to do to a game like this.

AND THE REST

ONLINE ONLY
Don't have an Internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.

EXPANSION PACK
See this and you're going to have to own the original to play the expansion. We know – life's not fair.

ON THE DISCS
Good news! Check out the cover discs for a playable demo.

The PC Class System

Not all games are created equal, so how do you know if your PC's up to the job? Using real science we've graded your system from 1-5. Match it with the icon on each individual review to see if your PC will play the game. We review all games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Alienware Area-51.

	1	2	3	4	5
CPU	1.5GHz	2.4GHz	3.0GHz	3.4GHz	4.0GHz
RAM	128MB	512MB	512MB	1GB	1GB
Video	64MB	128MB	128MB	256MB	512MB

ALSO REVIEWED

58 DUNGEON SIEGE II
64 MOTOGP: ULTIMATE RACING TECHNOLOGY 3
66 MADAGASCAR
66 ER
68 FAHRENHEIT
73 FANTASTIC 4
74 CODENAME: PANZERS PHASE TWO
75 X-PLANE V8
76 SPACE RANGERS
77 CONSPIRACY: WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION
77 PRO CYCLING MANAGER
78 CHROME SPECFORCE
79 RESTRICTED AREA
80 POWERDROME
81 CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY
81 TAXI 3: EXTREME RUSH
82 INDIE ZONE
All the latest releases from the independent development scene
84 BUDGET
Mashed, Breed, Dead Man's Hand, Desperados and more
86 YOUR SHOUT

PCZONE SWEARS...

- To only review code signed off by the publishers AND the developers
- To give you our honest opinion. We're gamers. We love games. And we hate bad ones. Just like you
- To tell you if a company refuses to send a game to us before it's on sale. There's always a reason
- To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?
- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at yourshout@pczone.co.uk



BRAVE and fearsome we might be, but legging it is always a good option.


CHANT at one of these and good stuff happens. No, not footie chants.


USE the terrain to your advantage if you're outnumbered.

DUNGEON SIEGE II

Laying siege to dungeons, hoping to catch a glimpse of a legendary beast, *Dave Woods* comes away ever-so-slightly disappointed

DEVELOPER Gas Powered Games
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.gaspowered.com/ds2
ETA September 2
PRICE £34.99

RECOMMENDED PCZONE RECOMMENDED

AT A GLANCE...

Dungeon Siege II hits third place behind *Guild Wars*, a beautiful-looking online RPG with immense depth, and the distinctly non-fantasy *Star Wars* role-player *Knights Of The Old Republic II*.

System requirements 2

HOW IT STACKS

GUILD WARS 94%
KOTOR II 88%
DUNGEON SIEGE II 80%

GO ANYWHERE in the business world and someone's guaranteed to have a great hook...

"We're going to bring the Japanese Sushi experience to England."

"The Internet. Honest, it's going to be huge."

"Gonzo porn."

Come to games and it gets a bit tougher.

"Plot. We're all about the plot."

"Characters. Because if you don't care about the characters what's the point?"

"Real-time graphics and sound."

"Tits. And bush."

And pretty much to a man (aside from the third, and he was new and his head was saying things that made no sense), they fail to deliver.

Not the original *Dungeon Siege*. Because it aimed low.

"No story!"

Check.

"Donkeys that carry your possessions so you don't have to pretend that you can fit six shields, 27 potions of plenty, a staff of giving, and a cloak of prettiness into your tiny backpack."

Check.

"Pretty things to hit with your sword and a huge f***-off dragon."

Check.

And that's why we liked it. But it's also the reason that it never rose to the rank of the unmissable. It was, in three words, good shallow fun. So, *Dungeon Siege II* then? More of the same? Yes and no...

FROM SMALL SEEDS...

Despite it seeming pretty obvious at the time, Gas Powered Games has finally cottoned onto the fact that an RPG needs a decent backdrop. It's not enough to wander through beautifully rendered 3D environments, right-clicking various bad things into submission. You need to care. So *Dungeon Siege II* has a story. One that develops as you progress through the game. It's not a great story, but it's a story nonetheless, and it's actually enough to make you want to carry on playing. (It revolves around a big sword, a big shield,


YOU can save at any time but you'll always have to restart at a town's teleport.



TOUCH it and you just know all hell's going to break loose.

some nasty guys, some good guys, and you and your party of exotic adventurers. Damn, that's just about given it all away. Sorry.)

And as well as adding a story, it looks like Gas Powered has taken inspiration from some of the top WWII FPSs for its intro and ease-in tutorial, which puts you in the middle of a big battle – complete with trenches – as a sword for hire. It quickly becomes apparent that you're not just a run-of-the-mill merc though, and it also transpires that you've chosen to fight for the wrong side. Drevin, your mate, is killed, you're badly wounded by the bloke who hired you (Valdis) and you wake up, and the game starts proper with you locked up like a dirty criminal. After proving you're not as bad as you seem, and getting a few far-from-cryptic nods of support from those with foresight (would you believe that you're actually the direct descendant of Azunai the Defender? Well blow me, what a coincidence...), you're freed and ready to start levelling up.

But there are no *EverQuest* rats in *Dungeon Siege II*. In a cunning twist, you spend the first few hours tackling walking seafood and

Your mate is killed, you're badly wounded and you're locked up like a dirty criminal



STOP attacking it for a second. Listen, you can hear the sea...



CINEMATIC cut-scenes progress the story.



POWER-UP your spells and you don't have to get close to ugly brutes like this.

Groundhog Day

And you don't even get Bill Murray to entertain you...

After my outburst in favour of abolishing quick-saves, this might seem hypocritical, but *DSII* needs more teleporters. The devices that let you return to a location without trudging miles. Even when you save, you have to restart at the nearest town, which makes some of the longer missions especially wearisome, with respawning going off all over the place.

Take this little mission... I was doing well, nearing the end, when a huge lobster thing burst out of the ground without any warning and slaughtered my party in two seconds flat. I reloaded, started back at the town, and spent about an hour getting back to the very same place. Gas Powered Games, sort this out in future...









YES, there are lots of dungeons. And lots of hacking. And slashing.

gaining cash, experience and the ability to equip fantastic new powers via a skill tree that you can add to when you've been particularly fearsome in battle. These add spectacularly awesome firepower to your arsenal, and it's one of the highlights of the game, with the likes of Brutal Attack (a Ronseal), Chain Lightning, and nicer Nature Magic like Healing and Resurrection. You're not going to get far without using these so it's worth spending a bit of time poring over the different options and specialising in a couple of big 'uns.

PARTY TIME

You don't need a crowd to have a party. But it helps. Size is limited by cash (up to an eventual maximum of six). For some unknown reason (and if we had the option of killing NPCs he would have eaten it by now) you have to pay the landlord of the inn to get permission to recruit others. So choose wisely. And make sure you've got a good balance of melee, ranged and magic users if you want to make mincemeat of some of the nastier opponents.

Unlike the first *DS*, you get to choose from four basic classes at the start of the game – Human (which somebody called 'boring' in a recent preview. Issues?), Half-Giant, Elf and Dryad, each with different strengths and weaknesses, and your choice here obviously impacts the recruits you'll make. You can also buy yourself a pet, an extension of the pack mule from the original.

OK, it's about time for the first niggle. Party formations are too simple. To set up you just drag the portrait of the character

you want at the front to the top, and vice versa. It works but it doesn't give you much scope for proper tactical fighting. You can also bark out two commands – Mirror and Rampage – which tell your party to focus on one strong adversary, or just run amok if you're faced with a bunch of crabs (*DSII*'s equivalent of *EQ*'s rats).

GIANT GAME

But let's not get too bogged down in the minutiae. *DSII* is a supposed epic and although it's not far removed from its predecessor in terms of being an out-and-out action RPG (the right button on your mouse will take a pounding), there are a few puzzles and the odd bit of NPC interaction to drag you through to the bitter end. And it's *hu-uge*; it'll take you about 60-70 hours to get through the whole thing. But for some reason it doesn't particularly gel and it leaves you feeling a bit bewildered. Yes, it draws you back and makes you want to carry on playing but you are never quite sure why. The story's ok. The missions are fair to average. The dialogue's nothing to get in a lather about. It just doesn't feel particularly inspiring. At least not until you've played through a good ten hours of pretty mundane stuff.

Where's the hook? The first one had donkeys. And superb flashy graphics that made you go 'Ooh'. *Dungeon Siege II* doesn't seem to think it needs one as long as it delivers a solid experience in every area. Unfortunately it leaves you feeling like you're running through



IS this the way to the KISS concert?

THIS is about as pretty as it gets. DirectX 9? Wassat?

USE your special powers to defeat the big boys.

It feels like a game you've played 100 times, only with different characters

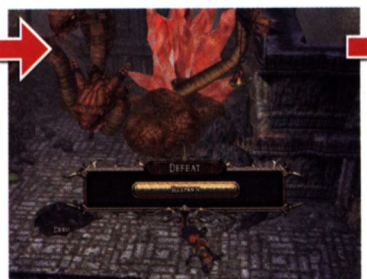
EPIC! ***DSII*** **couldn't hold its head up unless it gave you some meaty monsters to dispose of. This is the first one you run into... and it's harder than Peter Stringfellow after he's double-dropped a pair of blues.**



STAGE ONE Cower before the gigantic plague-ridden dragon. He's got three heads and the sort of breath you only get after drinking Red Bull all night.



STAGE TWO You can hide behind this conveniently placed wall until you realise he's not going away and you need to get shot of him to progress.



STAGE THREE Run at him with the best weapons and spells you've got, cause a big kerfuffle and get mushed. Damn his three regenerating heads.



STAGE FOUR Suddenly realise what you've got to do to defeat him and smile as he succumbs to your might. You truly are a great and worthy hero.



WE usually like monkeys. Gorgacks are an exception to the rule.

the motions, playing a game you've played a few hundred times before, only with different characters.

SYMPATHY SHAG

Although it seems trite these days to castigate a game for not looking good, it's not going to stop me having a pop. Frankly, *DSII* looks old, worn, and a bit ragged round the edges; the sort of game Wayne Rooney might fancy his chances with. Credit where it's due, the interface itself is a dream – it's something Gas Powered has always bragged about, and not without reason. You can swivel the camera by moving your cursor to the edge of the screen, zoom in, zoom out, arrange crane shots (we the made the last one up, but you get the point) and generally look at things exactly how you want. But, however you look at things, they don't look good. In fact, make use of the zoom function and you can see just how messy things really are (and there's no playing the game at that level anyway). In fact, it doesn't look much better than the original which, at the time, was pretty in a "Wow, look down at that path underneath the rope bridge I'm standing on" sort of way. And we were expecting more of the same in the sequel, but jazzed up to celebrate the fact that we're living in the year 2005. Instead we get this.

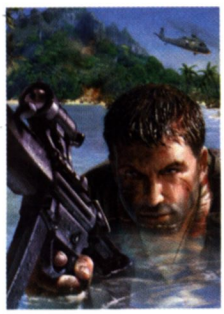
Maybe we were expecting too much, but when you've got the likes of the new *Age of Empires* winning Best Graphics In The World awards left and right, and the new *Elder Scrolls* game on the horizon, this just doesn't cut it. Hell, even *World of Warcraft* looks better than this, and that's an online game. There's no excuse, so we're not going to hang around waiting for one. And yes, we think it does impact on the game itself. An RPG like this is all about exploration. You want to round a corner and be hit in the face with an awe-inspiring vista, not a few crummy hills and the odd fairly impressive-looking dragon. Shame. On. You.

And that, as they say, is that. What you get for your money is an exceptionally solid RPG with plenty of life in it, but one that doesn't do anything particularly different to anything else on the market, and for that reason alone it guarantees one of our shiny new Recommended awards, but nothing more. PCZ

BOLLS!

There's no business for this sort of show business...



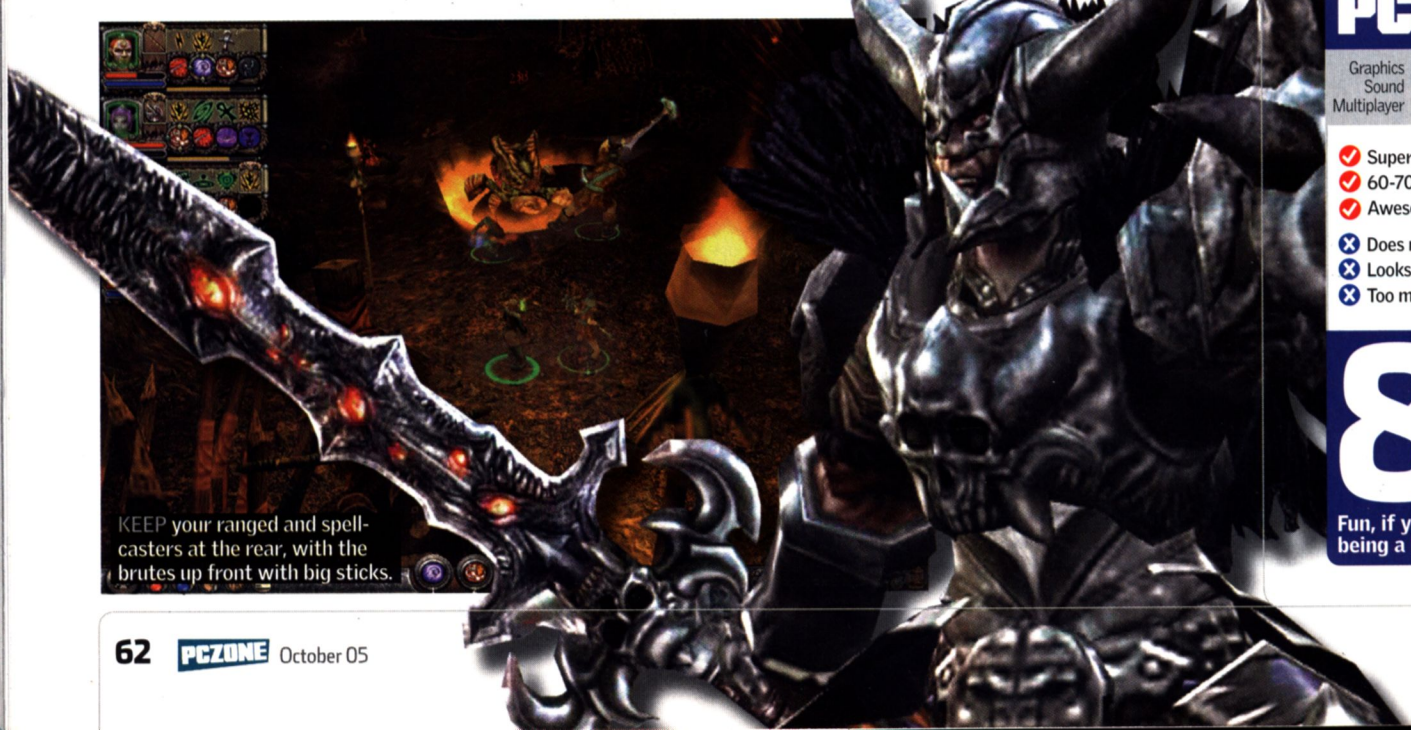


Who in the name of all things holy does Uwe Boll think he is? And when are big producers going to stop giving him bagfuls of gold so he can slaughter every game-to-film tie-in he touches? And you don't need to take my word for it – here's a random quote from IMDB: "This only got a 1/10 from me because I can't give it 0/10. Avoid like the plague, Uwe Boll has yet again spewed out a pile of trash." Words you'll realise are actually fairly generous if you've ever had the misfortune to sit through *House of the Dead*.

If you hadn't already guessed, Boll has unfortunately been given the reins on the 2006 *Dungeon Siege* release (along with my favourite game of all time, *Far Cry*) and amazingly, has managed to convince both Ray Liotta and Burt Reynolds to forget everything they've read about him and put their careers on hold to lop the heads off a few dragons. Maybe it's the *Lord of the Rings* fallout, but all the portents for this are very bad indeed...


LOSE your health and you'll fall unconscious, putting you out of the action until you recover.

DRESSING like a GWAR reject is mandatory.


KEEP your ranged and spell-casters at the rear, with the brutes up front with big sticks.

PCZONE

Graphics A bit of a munter
Sound Adequate
Multiplayer Co-operative play

- Superb interface
- 60-70 hours of action
- Awesome new powers
- Does nothing new
- Looks dated
- Too much repetition

80

Fun, if you're bored being a human

GOOD
vs.
EVIL

PLAYER
vs.
PLAYER

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MOTOGP: ULTIMATE RACING TECHNOLOGY 3

CD & DVD

***Steve O'Hagan's* always been hell-bent for leather. He assures us it's not a sex thing**

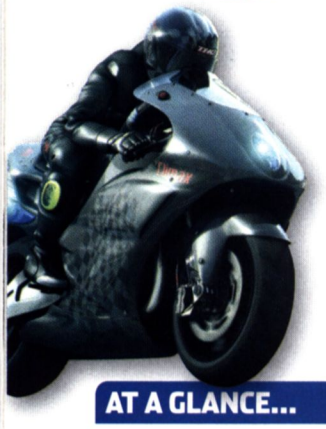






DEVELOPER Climax
PUBLISHER THQ
WEBSITE
www.climax.co.uk
ETA September 2
PRICE £34.99





AT A GLANCE...

The latest in a successful series of slick racers featuring all the riders, bikes and tracks from the real world of bike racing.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

GTA: SAN ANDREAS	92%
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND	84%
MOTOGP 3	75%

IF YOU'RE reading this opening sentence you're probably either a racing games aficionado or a big fan of the writing of Steve O'Hagan. As the latter camp consists of a mum and an adolescent nephew, we'll continue on the basis that you're here because you want to know exactly what marks this dose of carbon emission-reeking speed-freakage out from the last, rather than what inane pun this tired hack is going to spin next.

MotoGP has been around for a fair number of years now, and has pretty much blown away the opposition to become the PC's best thing on two wheels. In fact, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission have been rumoured to be looking into the fact that if you want a decent motorbike racing game on PC, there is only one choice: *MotoGP*. Boiled down, what it offers is twofold: realism and speed.

As far as speed goes, *MotoGP* has always delivered. Slick as hell, gleaming bikes, shimmering tarmac, rustling trees and expansive landscapes are propelled past you at what seems like the speed of light. Riders shake fists at other racers when they clip wheels, reflections flicker on polished paintwork, and you're treated to a quick replay every time you fall. The irony being that all this loving work – this polygon polishing and frame-rate oiling – is to a degree wasted: take your eyes off the track even for a moment and you're prone to come a cropper. So it all flashes by unnoticed as you focus on the track, until you hit 260kph or so, when the tasty motion blur kicks in, inducing something between exhilaration and nausea. But isn't that what a racing game is all about? As long as it can give you that slight 'I'm gonna cack myself' feeling of insane velocity, it's doing something right.

The realism aspect is another huge consideration. Here you have a whole host of elements that those behind the wheel of a car can ignore: leaning left or right to improve cornering, leaning forwards to improve speed on straights, backwards for better braking - there's even front and back wheel braking, for god's sake.

HELL ON WHEELS

Then there's the uniquely unforgiving handling of a bike. Some love the pressure of knowing that if your back wheel so much as touches a blade of grass then you're sent sprawling. Others hate the fact that the slightest brush with another rider sees you flying off your hog, receiving tenth-degree burns as your ass kisses the tarmac. It's for the latter camp, who have always been scared off by *MotoGP's* simulation-like attention to detail, that the game's most obvious addition has been made: Extreme Mode.

Extreme Mode will horrify *MotoGP* purists. It offers made-up riders riding







fictitious bikes on street and public road courses only loosely inspired by the areas in which they are set, from deepest South Africa to rural middle England. As you might guess, Extreme Mode panders to the arcade racing fan. It's fast, it's friggin' furious, and most importantly, it's a piece of piss to get the hang of. The handling lets you get away with murder, and there's no need to worry about leaning, or whether to slam the front or back brakes. Thing is, without a gripping career option within Extreme Mode, this really feels like a feature that's only going to come into its own in multiplayer.

TOUR OF DUTY

Aside from handling and dynamics, realism has another meaning in a racing game, and an official licence is duty-bound to deliver every last drop of the detail and paraphernalia surrounding its sport. So as well as being a high-velocity racing game, *MotoGP* is an absolute treasure trove for lovers of the sport, a veritable mud pit of detail to slop about in. Aprilias, Ducatis and Hondas – clearly the bikes are all in there. But more than that, should you wish to while away the hours in the virtual garage, you can customise your leathers, paint job and logos in an almost inexhaustible combination of ways, fiddle with the front and rear tyre compounds and suspension hardness, and tinker with the gear ratios to your heart's content.

All of which adds up to a customarily satisfying bike racer. It's damn fast, damn detailed, and with the added newbie-friendly Extreme Mode, it should ensure the bike game market is cornered for another year. It's doesn't reinvent the wheel, but it is does make it go round very, very fast. PCZ

ROAD KILL

Games don't kill people, rappers do



First-person shooters such as *Doom* drive kids to violence, such as the horrendous Columbine high school shootings in the US. Sadistic games such as *Manhunt* cause otherwise placid kids to flip their lids and brutally murder their friends. Racing games where you can recklessly motor at inhuman speeds, surviving multi-vehicle pile-ups and smashing your competitors off the road with impunity lead people to drive like homicidal maniacs in real life, right? That would account for the amount of young maniacs causing carnage on Britain's roads, would it not? For the almost daily reports of drivers ramming into other cars on motorways as they bid to overtake them? Yeah, right.

PCZONE

Graphics	Gleaming, as ever
Sound	Does what it has to
Multiplayer	Yes

- ✓ All the official riders, tracks and bikes
- ✓ Massive sense of speed
- ✓ Well-honed visuals
- ✗ It's hardly groundbreaking
- ✗ Motorbike racing is only for a select few
- ✗ Extreme Mode doesn't substantially change things

75

Hottest thing on two wheels

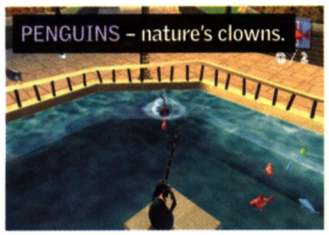


GENERIC gameplay plus animals. The kids love it.

MADAGASCAR

Get in touch with your animal side

DEVELOPER Beenox
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.madagascargame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99
System requirements 1


PENGUINS – nature's clowns.

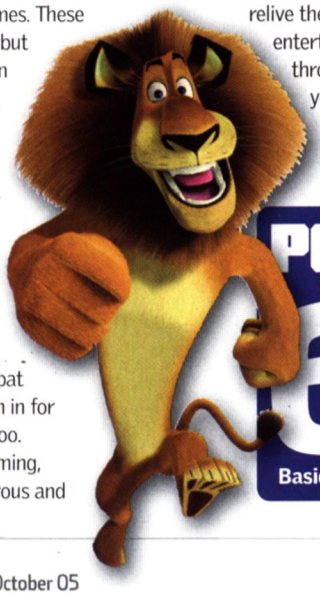
ANOTHER MASS-MARKET comical cartoon from Dreamworks can only mean one thing. Another mass-market videogame cash in. Surprisingly, though, this one's rather good. *Madagascar* oozes quality, even if its pre-teen gameplay makes it more of an amusing diversion than a genuine challenge. The beauty lies in its presentation and the meticulous attention to detail that's been put into recreating the movie's storyline with in-engine cut-scenes, rather than lazily stitched together excerpts from the movie.

This silky approach means the game moves at a satisfying pace, with cut-scenes flowing seamlessly into a variety of mini-games. These are varied enough but generally boil down to either basic hand-eye coordination challenges or platform-based escapades. What's more, there are a few vaguely challenging sneaking and combat sequences thrown in for good measure too.

The charming, humorous and well-performed story charts the adventures of four animals (Marty the zebra, Alex the lion, Gloria the hippo and Melman the Giraffe). The quartet break out of a zoo and embark on an adventure that eventually takes them to the titular island. With each creature possessing its own distinct personality and repertoire of special moves, there's variety involved, though the gameplay never has a chance to get too stale, as *Madagascar* is shorter than a monkey's dick.

Polished and fun, *Madagascar* is more of an interactive cartoon than a proper game, but if you want to relive the movie with a few entertaining distractions thrown in for the ride, you'll find a few fun-filled hours here.

Martin Korda



PCZONE 67
Basic but fun



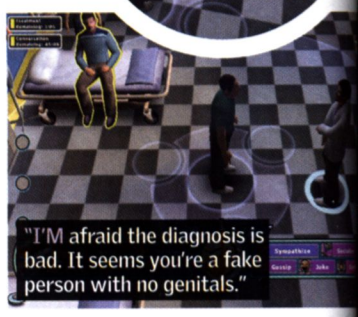
"I'M very sorry. He's going to be OK."

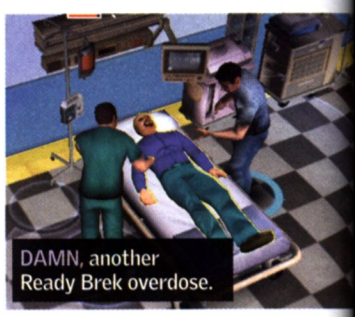


ER

Scalpels at the ready

DEVELOPER Legacy Interactive
PUBLISHER Mindscape
WEBSITE www.ergame.com
ETA September 9
PRICE £24.99
System requirements 2


"I'M afraid the diagnosis is bad. It seems you're a fake person with no genitals."


DAMN, another Ready Brek overdose.

DON'T WORRY, IT'S not as bad as it looks. You see, while *ER* may appear to be a DOA write-off with less life than a cremated corpse, it does possess just about enough breath in its lungs to prevent it from being a terminal case.

Jumping on the ever-more crowded *Sims* bandwagon, *ER* attempts (and fails) to capture the bustling hospital life – doctors trying to pork each other while saving the dying – depicted by the TV series that no-one's been watching since Clooney pissed off to be Batman.

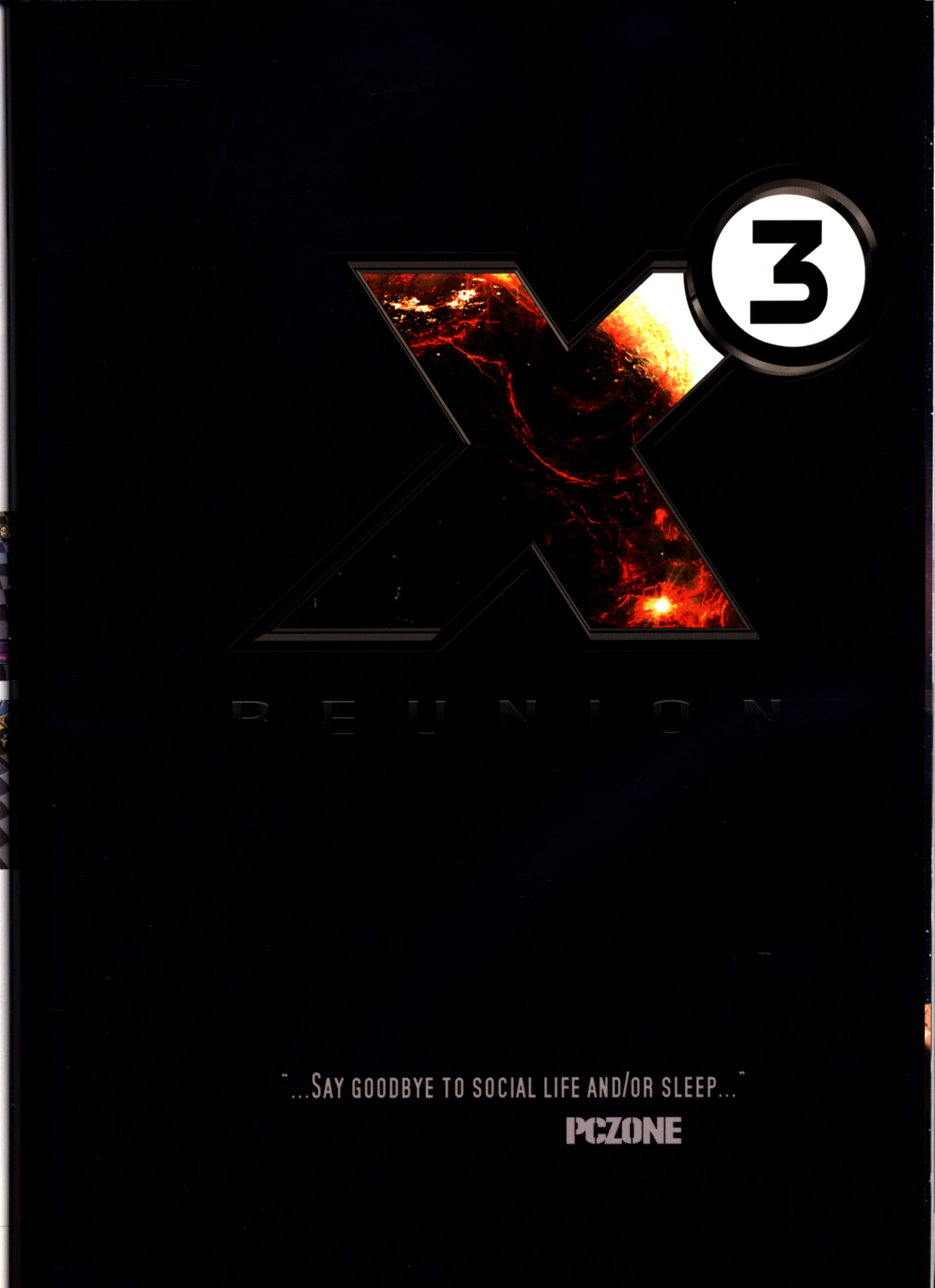
You play the role of a new intern, walking around the hospital treating patients, interacting with staff via nonsensical emotes and building up skills so that you can say things like, "He's tachicardic with a nine over four haemoglobin anal deficiency!" without having people thinking you're speaking utter bollocks.

Bereft of tension and riddled with lazy animations, *ER* is far from infectious, though it does have an underlying charm that might dazzle the more clinically inclined (or failed medical students). After a painfully slow start, things do begin to get more interesting, especially once you've mastered the art of emote-based conversation and built up your skills sufficiently to treat patients with injuries more severe than a grazed knee or a hairdryer up the rectum.

With a few of the current cast adding their voices and some punchy dialogue, *ER* is far from a dead loss. However, much like the NHS, it's ugly, slow and at times criminally inept.

Martin Korda

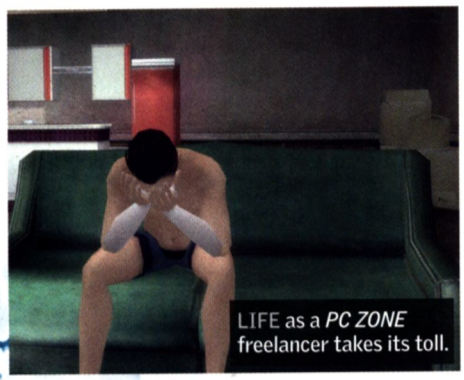
PCZONE 53
Lifeless

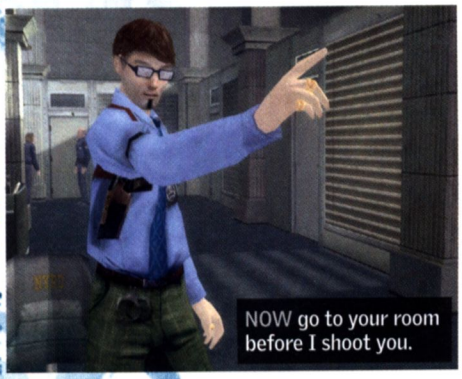

3
REUNION
"...SAY GOODBYE TO SOCIAL LIFE AND/OR SLEEP..."
PCZONE

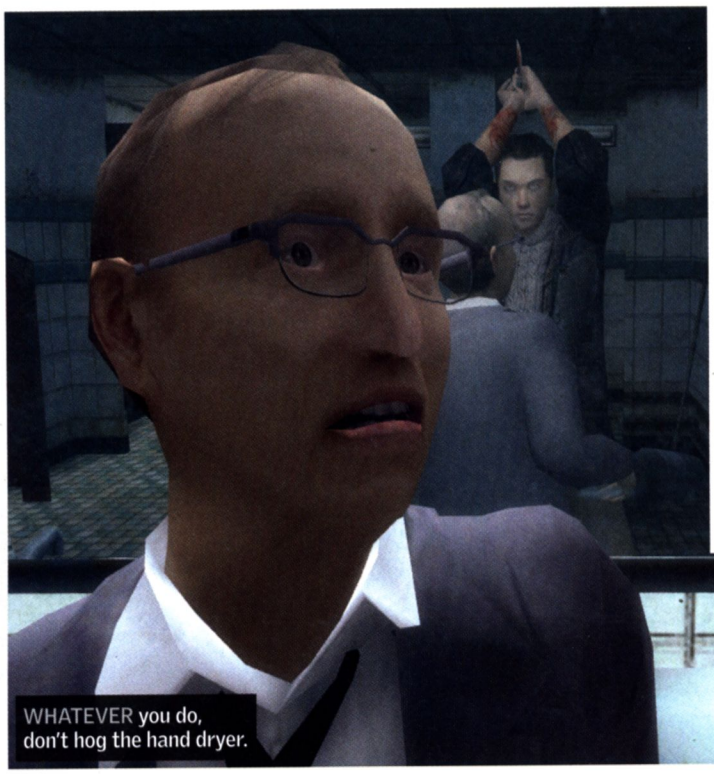


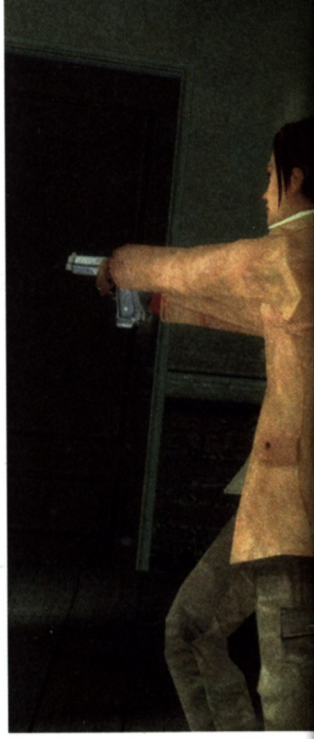
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THE THREAT iS OVER...
BEGiN THE REUNiON


LIFE as a *PC ZONE* freelancer takes its toll.


NOW go to your room before I shoot you.


WHATEVER you do, don't hog the hand dryer.



FAHRENHEIT

CD & DVD

Paul Presley's got chills and they're multiplying. Luckily he hasn't lost control... yet

DEVELOPER Quantic Dream
PUBLISHER Atari
WEBSITE
www.fahrenheitgame.com
ETA September 9
PRICE £29.99

CLASSIC • CLASSIC PCZONE CLASSIC • CLASSIC

AT A GLANCE...

Murder mystery adventure with demonic overtones, sub-zero temperatures and a cinematic approach to storytelling.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

FAHRENHEIT	90%
THE NOMAD SOUL	87%
BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON	75%

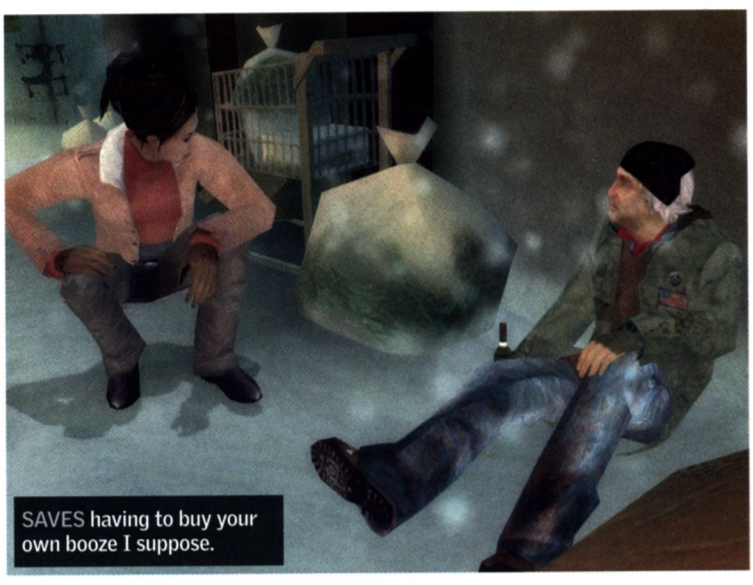
SO IS IT a brave new chapter in the lost art of interactive storytelling? An amalgam of filmmaking and gaming in a single package? Is David Cage the games industry's answer to Quentin Tarantino? Are the annual Oscars going to have to open a new category for Best Virtual Screenplay In A Non-First-Person Shooter? And will it lead to games finally being given proper, gravelly-voiced, "In a world..." trailers, red carpet opening night premieres at prestige branches of Game or HMV, and developers being hounded by paparazzi as they revel in their new-found fame and fortune by snorting huge lines of cocaine from penthouse hotel suites packed to the gills with girls and agents?

Good questions all and we can only guess at the answers. These are, after all, dark times. The suits are on the march, the audiences have been targeted with laser death ray precision, everything has 'attitude' and 'respect' and franchisable characters and it's a genuine miracle that something like *Fahrenheit* can even get made.

DARK DAYS

The adventure game market died a horrible death years ago, trampled to a bloody pulp in the mad rush towards FPS nirvana. If you weren't carrying an oversized gun and mowing down waves of bad guys like an '80s era Arnie in the throes of a heavy LSD-inspired panic attack, you might as well forget your chances at retail, my friends. LucasArts learnt the lesson and learnt it well, entering a grim, yet profitable era of *Star Wars* exploitation instead.

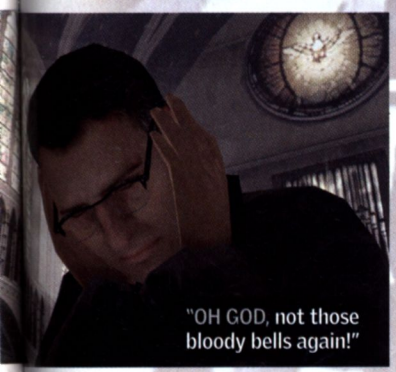
But not for *Fahrenheit's* creator, David Cage. Shrewdly, he realised that the trouble with point-and-click adventures was the 'point-and-click' part. People still wanted the stories, they just didn't want to have to 'Get Sword' and 'Use Sword On Giant Chicken'. So he set about hiding them, dressing them up in different clothes and comedy moustaches and hoping people wouldn't catch on. *Nomad Soul*, his


SAVES having to buy your own booze I suppose.

In these dark times, it's a genuine miracle that something like *Fahrenheit* can even get made



SOMETIMES it's hard not to bring your work home.



"OH GOD, not those bloody bells again!"

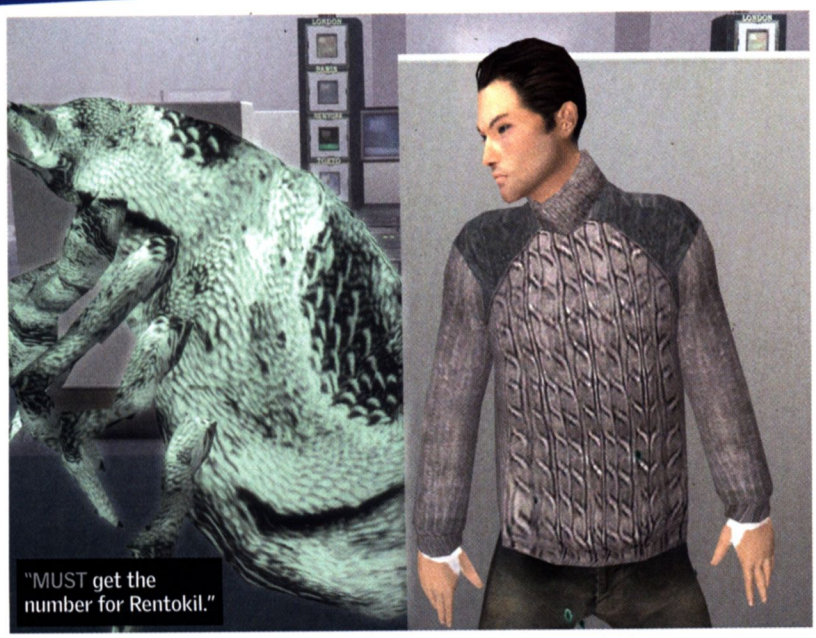
first toe in the waters at Quantic Dream, was a beautiful piece of misdirection. Take the traditional adventure mechanics and hide them in a *GTA*-style world. It almost worked too, but for most, *Nomad Soul* is a hidden game, a gem waiting to be discovered, never quite getting its moment in the sun.

ART ATTACK

Now *Fahrenheit*, and he's at it again. For all the talk of this being a new dawn in the age of interaction, what we're dealing with is an old-school adventure game with a different interface. Well I'm on to you Cage, I know what you're up to. But have no fear, your secret's safe with me. Hell, I'm practically encouraging you to keep at it! Yes sir, let's show these rat-f***ers what some goddamn men of vision can do when let loose! *Fahrenheit* is a work of art, dammit! And art needs to be respected, lest it creeps right up on you and bites off your testicles when you're not looking.

KEEP IT LIGHT

But is it a game? No. It's a story that you play through. It often suggests that you have the freedom to go where you want and do what you


"MUST get the number for Rentokil."


THE Village People auditions are this way.

Bogged Down

Surely some sort of record?

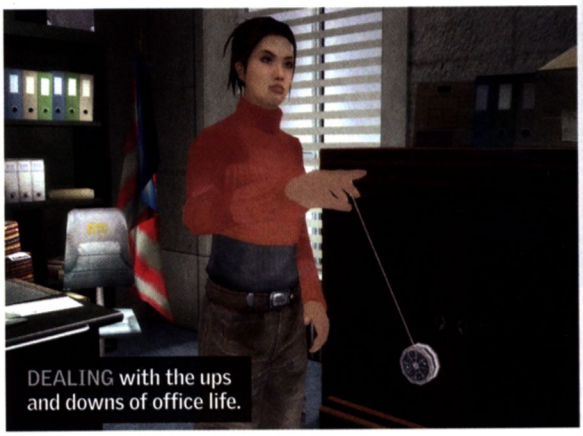
Other than the brilliant story and excellent character development, *Fahrenheit* has one other thing going for it – toilets. Dozens of the buggers. In fact, we'd go so far as saying it sets a new high for the most amount of crappers in a modern day game (unless anyone can prove different?). Here's a choice selection...








"NOW come here and give your Nan a big kiss."


DEALING with the ups and downs of office life.

will, but in truth it's cleverly constructed to continually channel you along a particular path, a necessity for the plot to unfold.

There are moments of absolutely sublime design work that hide this: multiple options; scenes that let you explore alternative character usage, and moments that show the plot from cop and killer perspectives at the same time – leading to some brilliantly tense ticking clock moments and *24*-style split-screen action, which veers just to the right side of being an over-used gimmick.

So the fine details change with each new play through a chapter, but the overall story will keep heading towards the ultimate conclusion. Even here you can find at least five different ways to reach one of the multiple end sequences – end sequences that for once all seem to have had as much sense of resolution put into them as each other (although several of the secondary characters did deserve a better send off I felt). If there is to be a sequel, there's definitely more potential in following on from one of the supposed 'failed' endings than the 'correct' conclusion.

You'll have noticed that I'm deliberately not giving away any of the plot. Let's get that clear right away. *Fahrenheit* is completely plot-driven and to reveal anything except the basic premise (already revealed in previous issues, or by playing the demo on this month's cover discs) would completely ruin your own experience. Suffice to say, what starts out as an intriguing murder thriller soon spirals outwards to encompass everything from The *X-Files* to *The Matrix* to *The Terminator*, even to *Silence Of The Lambs* and Hitchcock.

To reveal anything except the basic premise would ruin your experience

RHYTHM METHOD

Incredibly, Cage has taken an almost unprecedented step in game character development by exploring each of the main characters' personal lives and private flaws. Hence we have playable domestic arguments, phobias about the dark and heights, tender love scenes, exploration of depression and anxiety, all interactive (even the sex!) and all running alongside the main plot. In that sense alone, Cage is pulling off his goal of creating a near-film quality emotional experience that genuinely makes you care about the fate of these people as they grow and change. A staggering achievement considering that most Hollywood scriptwriters these days seem incapable of producing anything beyond mere ciphers to tie their over-blown action sequences around. For once it seems as though games are maturing while films are going backwards. Hoorah for us!

ENUNCIATION

Helping this is the acting. It was always going to be asking a lot for the voice actors to get us to see past the *Mafia*-style dead-eyed mannequins that are used for 3D models (although there has definitely been some improvement in facial expression animation since then), but they've done it. This is top quality work and combined with the realistic dialogue serves to make *Fahrenheit's* script one of the most

absorbing ever written for a game. You're sucked in like an industrial vacuum almost from the start and as the layers of plot unfold you can't help but play on for just one more scene to see where it leads.

SIMPLE SIMON SAYS

Which just leaves the actual 'gaming' part of things I suppose. As I said earlier, this isn't really a game in the traditional sense. Sure you get to walk around each location (some with more freedom than others), and in some places the interface is spot on. Conversation trees that give you limited time to choose a question add to the tension – during vital interrogations, for instance.

But the action sequences have one slight flaw in them – and by action I'm referring to almost anything from hanging from a helicopter to playing the guitar. Mostly, you have a rhythm action thing to contend with. Follow the flashing lights with your arrow and WASD keys to successfully negotiate a scene, with an occasional Track And Field style left-right button bashing for more strenuous activities. The only real problem with all this is that your concentration is so focused on watching the mini-game interface that you often miss the on-screen action you're performing as a result, really only seeing it through your peripheral vision.

In some places though it has been used in an inspired fashion. Question a suspect, for instance, and if you follow the lights correctly while he answers, you'll observe greater details and be given better clues to follow.

What impresses most about all this is how everything ties together, despite the multiple choice routes and the multi character control. This could easily have been a sprawling half-baked mess of Lucasian proportions. Luckily, Cage seems to have had his head screwed on properly for most of the planning stages and there are very few scenes that leave you feeling anything less than satisfied with their construction. Nothing feels superfluous. Everything has a point. Tight. Sculpted. Well-crafted scriptwriting.

OLD AND NEW

OK, let's wrap things up. Yes there are faults. Certainly, the graphics engine can at times look somewhat basic compared to the delights of Source et al. Some animation and motion capturing is superb, especially in terms of background atmosphere (an important and often overlooked aspect of creating an absorbing world). But in terms of texturing you'll often wonder if this is last year's technology at work. You can blame the



THE light your fart competition hots up.



The Art of Seduction

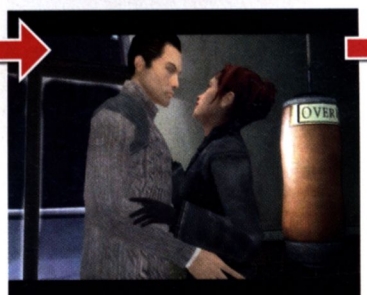
Proof that musicians get all the chicks...



WHOOPS, it's the ex come to pick up her stuff. Better work the old magic if I want to keep the record cllection.



HAVE I shown you my new chords, darling? This one's F-minor diminished and this is A-sharp.



THE old dog's still got it. I've shown you my G-string, now how about showing me yours?



WAHEY, it worked! Listen... puff... once we're done... pant... how about helping with the ironing... hhgghh...?



24-STYLE split-screen action ups the paranoia levels.

prolonged development time due to publisher switching if you like.

And yes, sometimes the old adventure game irritants crop up – like having to stand in exactly the right spot to activate an interaction, or needing redundant player input (getting out of a bed can take three pointless motions of the mouse, for instance).

The thing is, none of that matters. The story more than makes up for any minor deficiencies and in an experience like this, the story is everything. *Fahrenheit* is brave – a combination of storytelling and interaction that hasn't really been seen since around the early *Monkey Islands*. And it is worth every penny. It deserves your attention and deserves to act as a template for a new genre of interactive fiction. And Cage deserves a BAFTA or a Golden Onion or whatever they give in France.

The future's in all our hands now and it's a terrible responsibility. First, you need to get up and buy this damned thing. Buy it, play it, enjoy it, then demand more. Grab them by the lapels and threaten to gouge out their eyes unless we get more like it. Or at least be vocal in your praise. Write letters to magazines, post opinions on web forums, organise marches in public parks, anything to get the grapevine buzzing.

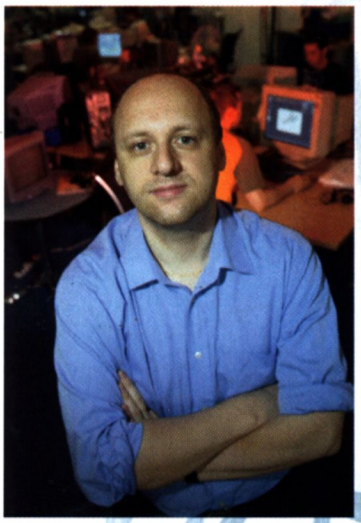
Second, Atari needs to stump up the cash and give the man and his team a decent engine to play with. Imagine these graphics if Quantic had used Source or Unreal Engine 3? Finally, and here's the rub, Cage needs to get back to work and quick. Sequel, follow-up, whatever. But strike while the iron is sizzling and the stock is on the up. Only, this time, don't be afraid to up the challenge factor. Hell, we don't mind having to think from time to time. I do it every third Sunday just to keep my hand in. PCZ



THERE'S always someone looking for a free doughnut.

OPEN THE CAGE

***PC ZONE* takes a stab in the dark with *Fahrenheit* creator, David Cage.**



Q How will you celebrate now you're at the end of this ambitious project?

A We will probably drink some champagne with the team and let everybody take a holiday. Although we are already quite busy working on our next gen projects, so...

Has the game changed since development started?

Not really. My games usually change very little during the development. I take the necessary time to write them, but after that I rarely change my mind. The story hasn't changed at all, we just changed a couple of things in the interface to simplify it after the first focus groups.

Which part are you most proud of?

All the parts where you really share the emotions with the characters on screen. There are some scenes where you strongly feel that it works. The story, the actor, the directing, the context and the gameplay, everything just seems exactly in place and you feel the chill on your skin. In these scenes, as a director and designer, you have the pleasant feeling that you made the right decisions.

What do you hope *Fahrenheit* will achieve for the adventure genre?

My biggest hope is that people will see why *Fahrenheit* is different. It shows a new way of interacting, of telling a story, of creating emotions rarely seen before in a videogame. I hope it will encourage developers to explore this genre and bring new ideas. I also hope it will encourage gamers to buy original games and not the same cheesy movie franchises or WW2 shooters. Our industry must become a creative one, with a vision, a strong ambition and the courage to take risks when it makes sense.

PCZONE

Graphics	Great animation, dated textures
Sound	Superb music track
Multiplayer	None

- ✓ Brilliant, brilliant story
- ✓ Character development
- ✓ Multiple ways through each scene
- ✗ Not the most challenging
- ✗ Slightly dated textures and models

90

The adventure game lives again







FANTASTIC 4

Stretchy, firey, craggy and sexy *Will Porter* trips the shite fantastic...

DEVELOPER Seven Studios
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.f4thegame.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE £29.99





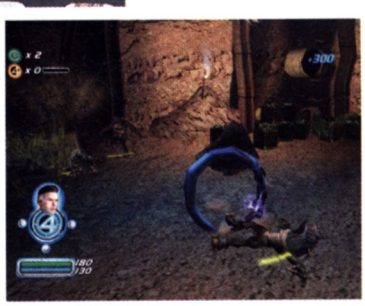
RING RING. "HEY there! It's Hollywood here, we want a game for the new *Fantastic 4* movie." Hi Hollywood, yeah we reckon we could knock one up for you. "Great! It's just these four guys beating shit up, they've been into space or something. One's made of rock." Cool, when do you need it by? "Next Friday. That OK?" Well, we could do with a little longer... how does a week on Friday catch you? "Why the hell not? We could do with a little bit of time to write the script anyway. Later nerd!"

Yeah, OK. I'm being a little harsh. *Fantastic 4* certainly doesn't chew man-bits as much as games like *Catwoman* or the truly hellish *Revenge Of The Sith* game on console. It's a traditional, room-by-room beat 'em up, with all the newfangled combos, finishing moves and unlockable fire-power so loved by the be-hoodied, ASBO-tagged youth of today. And it's not really that bad either.

At any time there are between one and four of the fantastic ones fighting evil (invariably all four are called in to shout stuff about teamwork when facing a particularly large boss) and you can swap between superheroes at will. Each character feels different enough to keep boredom at bay, although obviously The Thing and the Human Torch are the most fun, and each has a mind-boggling array of special powers that, combined with the high level of destructibility in foes and environments, feel nicely meaty. Dragonman needs mashing, hoodlums need thrashing, fire trucks need all your heroes to stand around them and press 'use' and Doctor Doom needs politely informing that he is the worst cinematic villain in recent history.

But it clearly screams console from every pore, mysteriously labelling keyboard controls as move icons in its frequent in-game hints, which engenders all manner of frustration. What it does, it does competently – but everything that *Fantastic 4* has to offer has been done better and with far more wit and imagination (with a worse camera, admittedly) in *Lego Star Wars*. It simply boils down to the fact that if you have a child or infirm relative who didn't have the ken to see the *Fantastic 4* movie as an unremitting shite-fest, then they'll like its tie-in game. Faint praise, but you have to admit it does the job. PCZ







AT A GLANCE...

Perfunctory movie tie-in with obvious console overtones. Remains better than its peers, but doesn't hold a candle to *Lego Star Wars*.

System requirements 1

HOW IT STACKS

LEGO STAR WARS 79%
FANTASTIC FOUR 59%
CATWOMAN 40%

PCZONE

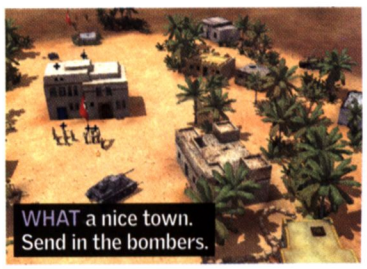
Graphics	Higher resolutions are there for PC. Not bad
Sound	Professional and noisy
Multiplayer	Enjoyable co-op mode

- ✓ A competent movie beat 'em up
- ✓ Neat special moves and combos
- ✗ For children rather than gamers
- ✗ Shallow, no replay value
- ✗ Based on a rubbish movie

59

Competent, but never fantastic.


WHEN Airfix attacks...


WHAT a nice town. Send in the bombers.

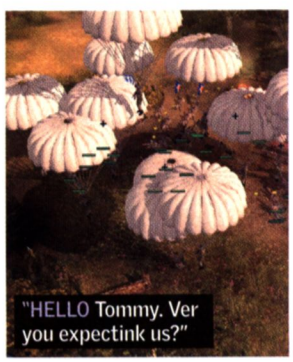

HOUSES, trees, telegraph poles: wreck them all.

CODENAME PANZERS: PHASE 2

DVD ONLY

Steve O'Hagan goes through another Nazi-bashing phase in this WWII RTS follow-up

DEVELOPER Stormregion
PUBLISHER CDV
WEBSITE www.panzers.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99


"HELLO Tommy. Ver you expectink us?"

AT A GLANCE...

Pick-up-and-play World War II RTS that's big on the pyrotechnics and light on the realism...

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II	90%
CODENAME PANZERS: PHASE 2	72%
BLITZKRIEG: ROLLING THUNDER	61%

PANZERS HAS GOT to be the worst codename ever. Codenames are supposed to be smokescreens to ensure secrecy for your mission, not to tell your enemy *exactly* what the hell is going on. This is a WWII RTS specialising in tank-on-tank action, so if you're going to give it a codename, make it 'buttercup', or 'peckerneck' for god's sake.

But that's *Codename Panzers: Phase 2* all over – there's little surprising, covert or unexpected about it. Like its younger brother released last year, it parades its tried-and-tested RTS conventions like the Soviet Army showing out at Red Square. As soon as you've left-clicked a tank and right-clicked something for it to blow up, you feel like a seasoned vet. This is WWII-themed strategy made as easy and fun as jumping into a sandpit and bashing two Tonka toys together.

IT'S JUST A PHASE

For *Phase II*, developer Stormregion hasn't modified its plan of attack vastly from *Phase I*. This time, the three single-player campaigns let you command Italian, UK/US or, interestingly, Yugoslav-partisan forces. A cartwheeling plot for each campaign is propelled by crude cut-scenes, which are frankly entirely superfluous in this kind of game. Who needs tales of loyalty and betrayal when there's a war to be won?

From these stories spring *Panzers'* 'hero' figures, who are supposed to add RPG spice to the missions, but instead do little other than give you something else to worry about: if your hero dies, it's game over.

With its old-skool isometric view (which can be panned and zoomed to a degree), *Panzers* is not overly ambitious visually. Flaming explosions, toppling trees and swooping dive bombers all look the part, as do the intricate troop animations, but no new visual territory is conquered. The sound however, is something else, with hilariously stereotyped voice-acting – 'how's-yer-faaava' cockneys and 'mamma-mia!' Italians – adding a

With no units to build, you're left to coddle your forces like an overbearing matron

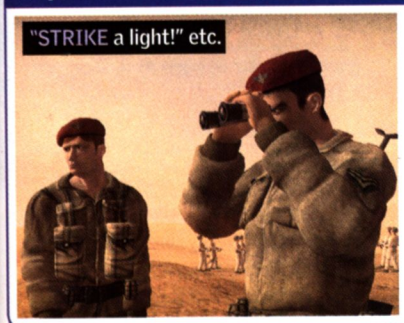

"QUICK men, take cover in this dynamite shed."



DEMOLITION Derby, WWII style.

Lovely Jubbly

Why is it that British troops in WWII-set PC games are all cockneys?



"STRIKE a light!" etc.

Cor blimey, it wasn't just a bunch of barrow boys from The Old Kent Road who did for Mr Hitler, y'know? Field Marshall Montgomery wasn't a Pearly King. The British Army didn't go into battle singing *Roll Out The Barrel*. Videogames are like TV was in the 1950s, where English accents fall into two camps: people either sound like Lord Fauntleroy, or they talk as though they're trying to get you to buy half a pound of jellied eels... Sort it you muppets!

sense of fun, even if it does border on the racially offensive.

OOH, MATRON!

As before, missions are rammed with tasks: just when you thought you'd reached your goal, a new objective is introduced. Secret and optional missions also appear, with Prestige awards points on offer for each. This Prestige can be spent between missions on beefing up your troops for the next round.

Achieving these goals is a case of force management. With no resources to collect or units to build, you're left to mollycoddle your existing forces like an overbearing matron, constantly repairing and rearing them between each skirmish. This pattern of 'he who repairs wins' ironically has led to just as big an RTS cliché as the resource-gathering it sought to replace.

In addition, new features introduced here are not easy to spot – you could play *Phase I* and *Phase II* and not notice the difference. A mission editor should please if you've got time on your hands, though other than a few new unit types and minor touches, the song remains the same.

So in the end, *Panzers Phase 2* is to *Phase 1* what the Nazi invasion of France was to the Nazi invasion of Poland: effective, but relying on pretty much the same troops and tactics. And if you've crisscrossed Europe in countless campaigns from *Sudden Strike* to *Blitzkrieg*, battle fatigue could easily set in. PCZ

PCZONE

Graphics	Pleasant isometric destruction
Sound	Great talk-track, booming bombs
Multiplayer	2-8

- ✓ Easy to get into
- ✓ Emphasis on action
- ✓ Goal-laden missions
- ✗ Over-simplistic for hardcore strategists
- ✗ Not much new since *Phase I*
- ✗ Looking a little old-hat

72

Still fun, but ageing quickly



THIS used to be cutting edge.

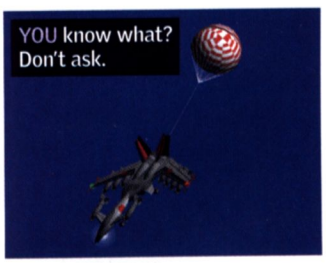
X-PLANE V8

A self-explanatory flight sim...

DEVELOPER Laminar Research
PUBLISHER Horizon Simulation
WEBSITE www.x-plane.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £39.99
System requirements 4



OH, the humanity!



YOU know what? Don't ask.

I SAY, I SAY, I SAY. How hardcore is *X-Plane V8*? *X-Plane V8* is so hardcore that it doesn't have an automatic installer (you have to do it yourself). It's so hardcore it doesn't even create shortcuts on your desktop or in your Start menu (you have to find the .exe file yourself every time you play). It's so hardcore when it sits around the house, it sits *around* the house... No wait, wrong joke. Basically, it's hardcore to the max. And then a little bit further.

Which naturally means we don't need to mess around with things like nice presentation, user-friendliness or, you know, half-decent graphics. Truth is, while *X-Plane* may well have the edge over Microsoft's populist rival in terms of accurately-modelled flight dynamics and tools to create your own worlds and aircraft, it falls so far behind the Big M in terms of creating a simulation experience that's enjoyable to use and attractive to look at that you might as well not bother.

Sure, you can fly a zeppelin on Mars if you want, but aside from slightly more responsive flap settings, blowier wind (to use the technical term) and a guest appearance from Stephen Hawking as the voice of air traffic control (joke), *X-Plane* offers very little that Microsoft's doesn't already do both prettier and more intuitively. Basically when it comes to sims, you're better off flying the world's favourite (virtual) airline.

Paul Presley

PCZONE

66

Hardcore, but hardly a game


WHEN Citroen C4s turn nasty...


DON'T mention the third eye.


KWIK-FIT of the future.

OI, sneaky.



SPACE RANGERS

Paul Presley discovers they don't make them like this any more

DEVELOPER Elemental Games
PUBLISHER Excalibur Publishing
WEBSITE www.space-rangers.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE £29.99



DON'T WORRY, IT'S not as bad as it looks. *Space Rangers* is one of those games that comes from nowhere, looks from the box like a bad joke wrapped in a bizarre piece of revenge fantasy sent to test your patience by a hated enemy, but somehow defies all the odds and keeps you playing thanks to the magic gameplay juice that developers like to pull out of their arses from time to time.

Anyone old enough to remember such yesteryear 'classics' as *Masters Of Orion* will have an inkling of what's going on here. For the most part it's the kind of top-down, 2D turn-based space exploration that went out of fashion around the same time as heterosexual boy bands. Throw in a spot of trading, piracy, law enforcement, asteroid mining and alien baiting for good measure, then add some basic yet engaging planet-based stompy robot RTS action, the occasional multiple choice text adventure (go figure) and a strange *Asteroids*-like mini game and that's *Space Rangers*.

Sounds like a horrible mess, doesn't it? A car crash of loose ideas, backwards thinking and outdated gaming ideas tied together with a functional yet underwhelming visual style. It isn't though. I've installed, reviewed and promptly uninstalled many, many games in my time on planet Earth, but *Space Rangers* (actually a package incorporating two previously unreleased *Space Rangers* games) has somehow managed to remain a fixture on my already cluttered hard drive. Because it's playable. Very playable.

Something just grabs you and keeps you there. Maybe it's the sense of humour (a paragraph in the manual cheekily explains away any translation errors by basically saying, "It's the future, that's how they talk now"). Maybe it's the hidden layers of depth. Maybe it's the amount of freedom you have to play any way you want. Maybe it's just very, very good game design.

Whatever it is, *Space Rangers* isn't going to break any sales records and may not even stay on the shelves very long. But if you play it you will enjoy it, and you can't really ask for more than that. PCZ



DARLINGTON'S certainly come on a bit.

AT A GLANCE...

Old-school *Masters Of Orion*-style space exploration that still has it where it counts (ie, not in the graphics department).

System requirements 1

HOW IT STACKS

EVE ONLINE	88%
EARTH 2160	83%
SPACE RANGERS	71%

PCZONE

Graphics	Functional
Sound	Music grates eventually
Multiplayer	None

- Strangely playable
- Plenty of freedom
- A nice mix of genres
- Fairly basic really
- Won't trouble the triple-As

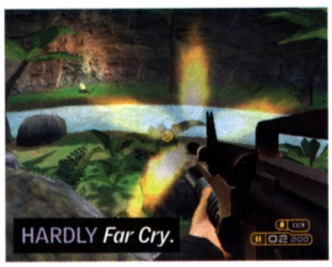
71
Surprised us too



CONSPIRACY: WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Dodgy goings-on, in every sense

DEVELOPER Kuju
PUBLISHER Oxygen Interactive
WEBSITE www.conspiracywmd.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99
System requirements 1



IN A MOVE certain to send shockwaves along the spine of established game cliché protocols everywhere, the hero of action-packed shooter, *Conspiracy: Weapons Of Mass Destruction* is 51! This means he's as likely to be struggling against the forces of evil and darkness as he is against his aching back and dodgy hip.

Unfortunately, it's the only concession to originality in this laughable attempt at creating a modern-day shooter. If *Half-Life 2* is at one end of the spectrum, pushing back the very fabric of what is capable with today's technology, *Conspiracy* is still looking up how to spell spectrum in the dictionary.

Five (count 'em) whole levels of mediocre visuals, non-existent AI and simplistic level design. Five levels that take about 20 minutes to zip through. Five levels to save the world from a giant missile in a plot so poor it could have come straight from any brain-dead pre-teen Saturday morning kids *G.I. Joe* cartoon. Although that would have featured better animation.

You can tell the level of care being spent on this when you read "After you install *Euro Rally Champion*..." in the manual. There's no option to up the screen resolution from 640x480, the death sequence is dull and the graphics are shit. Thirty quid has never seemed so worthless.

Paul Presley



PCZONE 12
Bad, bad, bad, bad, etc...



PRO CYCLING MANAGER

Slipping into gear and out of the lycra

DEVELOPER Cyanide
PUBLISHER Digital Jesters
WEBSITE www.cycling-manager.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99
System requirements 2



WE'VE ALL EXPERIENCED cycling in some form, be it an unsuccessful drunken midnight trip down to your local all-night garage on your sister's bike, or a short-lived alternative to the morning commute. It's something that most of us have in common.

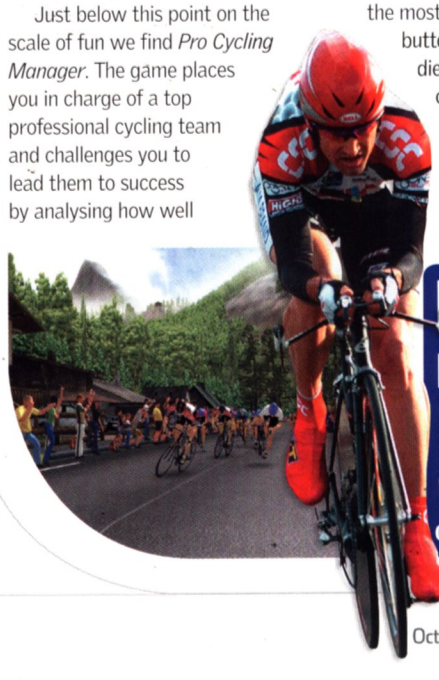
It's also great fun if you can be arsed doing it. However, travelling between two distant and arbitrary locations in mostly straight lines isn't fun. Less fun is managing people who travel between these locations in mostly straight lines.

Just below this point on the scale of fun we find *Pro Cycling Manager*. The game places you in charge of a top professional cycling team and challenges you to lead them to success by analysing how well they cycle on cobblestones and what they've eaten for breakfast.

After wading through screen after screen of bafflingly detailed statistics and pretending to understand it all, the concept of actually seeing a bunch of bike-riding Europeans in tight lycra sweat for several hundred kilometres becomes almost too exciting.

Pretty soon though, it becomes apparent that, sadly, it's not exciting at all, and that ordering one of your riders to drink some water is possibly the most boring thing a left mouse button has ever done. Only die-hard cycling enthusiasts could garner any enjoyment from this game. It's bland, vaguely interactive and utterly confusing.

Steve Hogarty



PCZONE 32
Cycling really is rubbish









CHROME SPECFORCE

You can't reheat a soufflé, but how about a dodgy Polish FPS? *Anthony Holden* turns up the heat

DVD ONLY

DEVELOPER Techland
PUBLISHER Deep Silver
WEBSITE www.specforcethegame.com
ETA August 19
PRICE £19.99



AT A GLANCE...

More of a budget remix than a true sequel, *Specforce* is a huge improvement on the woeful *Chrome*, but still feels a bit pikey.

System requirements 2

HOW IT STACKS

FAR CRY 93%
HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED 84%
CHROME SPECFORCE 61%

WHAT DO YOU do when you've made an embarrassingly flawed and amateurish FPS that's been roundly scorned by the respectable media (ie, us) and dismissed by gamers as sub-*Halo* nonsense?

Conventional wisdom dictates that you should leave town, fake your own death and possibly get a job at Atari, but *Chrome* developer Techland has taken a more courageous approach. Ignoring cautions about the intractable nature of turds, the Polish outfit has set about a comprehensive salvage operation, taking all the good parts of the original game (and there were a few) and refashioning them into something a bit less shit.

The result is *Chrome Specforce*, a sci-fi FPS in the grand tradition of, erm, *Chrome*. Once again you play tough guy Bolt Logan, formerly a devil-may-care mercenary and bounty hunter, now mysteriously transformed into an elite Specforce operative in the Federation military. An unscrupulous corporation is using mafia connections to sell a new strength-enhancing drug, and it's up to you and your buddy Pointer to investigate.

Taken purely as a renovation project, *Chrome Specforce* is a resounding success. Almost every part of the game is improved beyond measure, from the level design, gameplay and pacing right through to the script and voice-acting. The graphics too have been given a generous spit-wipe, though the fact that many of the game assets are hand-me-downs from *Chrome* – including buildings, vehicles and character models – does slightly take the shine off.

FRESH AIR

Specforce also plays to the strengths of the engine, keeping the action focused on the great outdoors and lovely dense foliage, while avoiding the endless bland interiors and rubbish desert missions of the first game. The vehicles too – useless and wasted in *Chrome* – are brought to the fore. Most of the missions now conclude with a vehicle sequence of some sort, be it a mech-walker shoot-out or a Jedi-inspired speeder chase. Some of the handling is still pretty poor, but at least it works.

Taken purely as a renovation project, *Specforce* is a resounding success

Despite all this, some of the worst crimes of *Chrome* remain intact. The AI is still far from convincing, with enemies that stand immobile in the face of danger and shoot with unerring



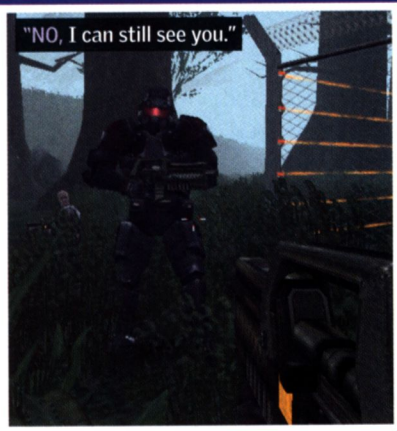


SUPERPOWERED

Farewell cyber-implants, hello power armour!

One of the most poorly implemented aspects of *Chrome* was the cyber-implant system, so in *Specforce* it's been overhauled and turned into a 'Power Armour' system.

Essentially it's the same thing. The four most rubbish abilities have been scrapped, though to be honest they were so useless we can't even remember what they were. I think one was 'enhanced banjo playing' and another was 'superb wine palate'. In any case, what you're left with is invisibility, neural boost (bullet-time), speed and power shield. Unfortunately, the invisibility doesn't seem to fool anyone, but the other three are quite handy.


"NO, I can still see you."


OF the five or six vehicles, the mech-walkers win hands down.


"HEY, there's a warm patch over here!"

accuracy across great distances. The interiors too, though less extensive, are still rubbish and strewn with hundreds of storage units that you feel obliged to open just in case. Plus, the *Deus Ex*-style inventory remains clumsy, forcing you to constantly rearrange items and preventing you from carrying more than one or two good weapons at a time.

AND ON, AND ON...

There's also a strong feeling of monotony to *Specforce*, and it's something that begins in the graphics. Perhaps seeking to distinguish the game from its predecessor, Techland has imbued *Specforce* with a very brown, uniform look, draining the colour palette to shades of mud. This is not necessarily disastrous, but in combination with repetitive gunplay and bland AI it creates a dull, uninspiring tone that blights the whole experience.

Certainly, *Specforce* is the game *Chrome* should have been (and at the price it should have been too). If it had been like this two years ago we may actually have been interested. PCZ



PCZONE

Graphics **Patchy**
Sound **Workmanlike**
Multiplayer **Yes**

- ✓ Large outdoor environments
- ✓ Cheap as chips
- ✗ Sub-standard AI
- ✗ Monotonous gameplay and graphics
- ✗ Still feels like *Chrome*

69

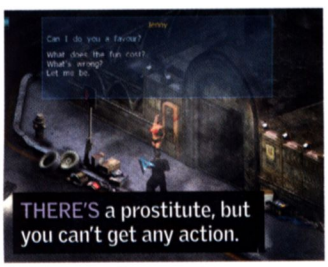
Still just a poor man's *Far Cry*


THAT Johnson's a powerful weapon.

RESTRICTED AREA

They can't get enough of it in Germany

DEVELOPER Master Creating
PUBLISHER Whiptail Interactive
WEBSITE www.restricted-area.net
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99
System requirements 1


THERE'S a prostitute, but you can't get any action.

ACCORDING TO *Restricted Area*, catastrophic destruction of the environment and mass starvation is due in about 70 years, so we'd best crack on then – the game is a *Diablo* clone in a crappy German *Fallout*-style cyberpunk world.

You begin by choosing one of four characters, each possessing unique skills and special abilities, including a sassy hacker called Jessica Parker and a shadowy ex-military commander with the look of JC Denton from *Deus Ex* called Johnson.

As with all role-playing games, *Restricted Area's* bread and butter is in the levelling-up of character's skills and weapons, but you can also enhance your Johnson (sorry) by using bio-mod implants, such as bionic arms, cyber hearts and electronic eyes. However, you never get to see the appearance of your character change – it would've been nice to see them strutting along on a pair of buzzing, robotic legs.

From a central inner city hub, you interact with various NPCs to buy medical supplies, ammo and so on. It's also here that you receive missions from a dodgy businessman called Mr Jones, which involve flying to a new location, collecting pick-ups and valuable objects and killing dozens of mutants and monsters.

Unfortunately, it's here that *Restricted Area* falls down – and that's nothing to do with malfunctioning limbs. The combat quickly becomes repetitive, simply involving mouse-clicking on-screen to shoot at the blindingly stupid enemies blundering towards you, retreating if they get too close, then shooting again, maybe using a barrel of explosives for a bit of a change. A decade ago, *Restricted Area* might have been cutting edge – but not now.

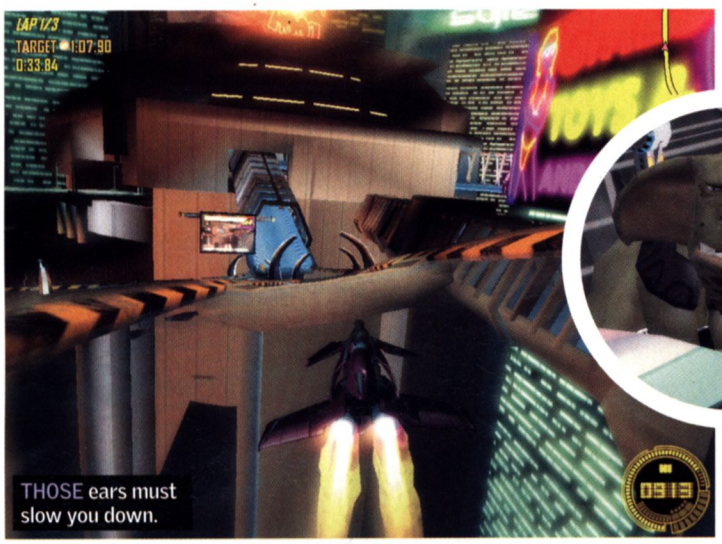
Jamie Sefton



PCZONE

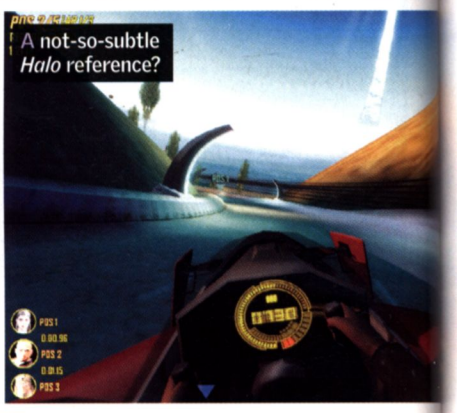
48

The future is dull



THOSE ears must slow you down.


JEREMY Clarkson couldn't handle one of these.


A not-so-subtle *Halo* reference?

POWERDROME

Jamie Sefton goes back to the future

DEVELOPER Second Intention
PUBLISHER Zoo Digital
WEBSITE www.zoodigitalpublishing.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE £19.99

AT A GLANCE...

Powerdrome is a good *F-Zero* clone, but if you can live without the futuristic theme, you're better off with the fun and furious *TrackMania Sunrise*.

System requirements 2

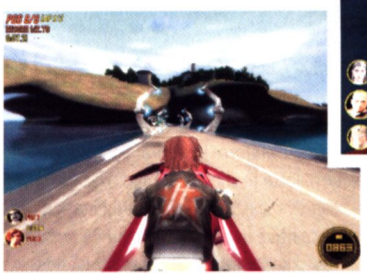
HOW IT STACKS

TRACKMANIA SUNRISE 83%
STARWARS: EPISODE 1 – RACER 74%
POWER-DROME 61%

I ALWAYS FIND it bizarre that futuristic racers whizz by at such ridiculous speeds – if current traffic trends continue, we'll be able to crawl on our hands and knees faster than most vehicles in about ten years time. However, *Powerdrome* is the latest of this increasingly niche genre to hit the PC, having originally been an Atari/Amiga game back in 1989 and a remake on consoles just last year.

And what do you know, it's actually not bad. *Powerdrome* definitely has the feel of a desperate *F-Zero* copy about it, but by god, I've played worse. Ignoring the usual nonsense about collapsed civilisations and illegal racing syndicates, the game involves belting around the tracks in fast-moving hover-ships called blades, taking part in time trials, various championships and other challenges.

You have a choice of 12 different characters, including clichéd playboy types, decommissioned war robots and flappy-eared aliens. Each possesses a racing craft with a unique combination of stats for top speed, armour and so on. There's no room for customisation though, so you're stuck with the basic designs – definitely a trick missed.



HOVER BOVVER

With no weapons available either, you win races by learning the twisty-turny tracks, and using your blade's ability to turbo boost – frenetic power-ups that are gained by hitting maximum speed for a couple of seconds. With up to three boosts available, you can link these together for extreme velocity, and also use them to ram into opponents, smashing them out of the way and causing fiery damage to their blade.

Initial doubts about *Powerdrome* are soon replaced with a slow creeping realisation that you might be actually enjoying yourself – the determination to win races increasing as you realise that victory unlocks more new tracks, characters and events. The visuals aren't great, but the impacts during battles with the AI ships or friends across a LAN do get the heart racing a bit faster.

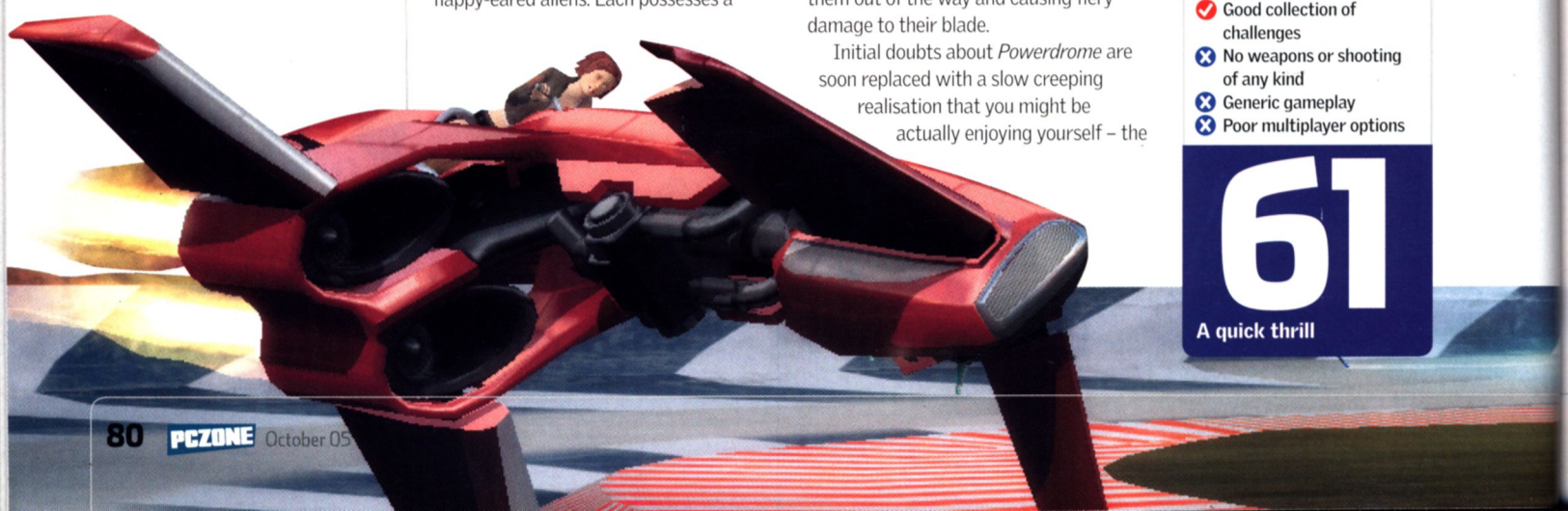
Unfortunately, there's really no comparison between *Powerdrome* and the vastly-superior recent console racers, such as *F-Zero GX* on the GameCube, but this futuristic blast from the past remains a half-decent waste of a weekend. PCZ

PCZONE

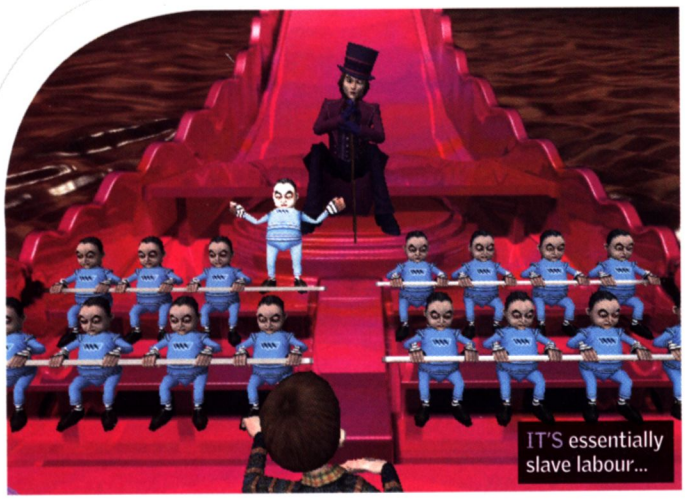
Graphics Hardly state of the art
Sound Bog-standard
Multiplayer Yes, across a LAN

- ✓ A competent futuristic racer
- ✓ Good collection of challenges
- ✗ No weapons or shooting of any kind
- ✗ Generic gameplay
- ✗ Poor multiplayer options

61
A quick thrill



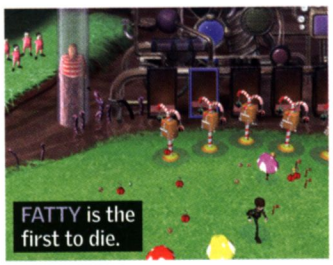



IT'S essentially slave labour...

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Rotting your teeth and your brain

DEVELOPER Backbone Entertainment
PUBLISHER Global Star Software
WEBSITE www.charliegame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99
System requirements 1


FATTY is the first to die.

BASED ON THE delightful children's story about a factory-owning hermit who invites some kids into his home with promises of candy before systematically maiming and brutalising them, ***Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*** **is the game to accompany the recently released Depp-laden movie from Tim Burton.**

Placing you in the shoes of Charlie himself, the game sets you the task of completing various mini-games based around either collecting ingredients or rescuing the unfortunate individuals the deranged Mr Wonka has taken a dislike to. Of course, being aimed squarely at kids means that the mini-games are extremely simplistic and that even little Toby with his pie-like dexterity will have no trouble navigating Wonka's factory.

The ominous Willy Wonka himself, whether it was intended or not, looks and sounds disturbingly like Michael Jackson, and his army of Oompa Loompa slaves are no longer the orange-skinned and green-haired midgets we know and love.

Admittedly these are issues that came about with Tim Burton's retelling of the tale, but they filter down into the realm of badly made movie tie-in games where I, as a *PCZ* peon, have the power to criticize them. Quite why children aren't terrified of Wonka's murderous tendencies and purple outfit is beyond me, but this will only really be enjoyed by young sugar-addled Wonka fans.

Steve Hogarty



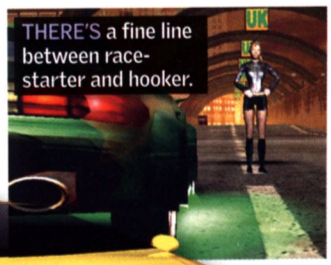
PCZONE 27
A not so golden ticket


YOU race against chavs with names like Phil and Harry.

TAXI 3: EXTREME RUSH

A mild rush at best

DEVELOPER Team 6 Game Studios
PUBLISHER Fusion Labs
WEBSITE www.taxi3.co.uk
ETA Out now
PRICE £9.99
System requirements 1


THERE'S a fine line between race-starter and hooker.



THE INCREASINGLY POPULAR **pastime of sticking lights underneath cars and making them sound like dying lawnmowers has inspired developers to create games based solely around modifying and racing them up and down streets in highly illegal and motion blurred racing events. The latest in the *Need For Speed* series is an example of how this should be done. *Taxi 3: Extreme Rush*, unsurprisingly, is not.**

From its underwhelming graphics and sound to the shopping-trolley handling and "oh look, my car is apparently made of rubber" physics, the game reeks of a budget title. And when there are so many better alternatives on the shelf there's no reason to even consider buying this.

Taking place in some alternate-reality London with a population of 12 cars and two buses (good old congestion charging), *Taxi 3* sees you earning respect, money and contacts in the hope of reclaiming your beloved black cab, which was stolen from you at the start of the game. To do this, you take part in three kinds of race – Street, Drag and City – all equally uninspiring checkpoint-chasing affairs the likes of which have been produced far better in other racing games.

There really is no upside to any of this – we tried to find one by attempting to drive over the girl who starts the race, but even that was unsuccessful as she appeared to be a ghost of some sort. Bloody women.

Steve Hogarty

PCZONE 21
Better off on the bus

You won't find any of these Indie games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our discs.

indiezone

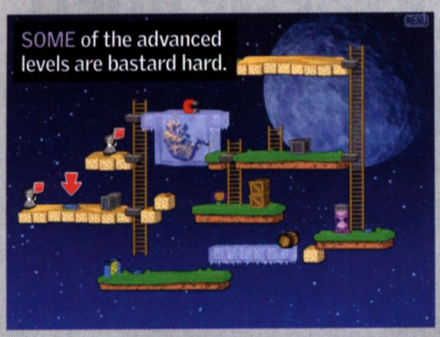
CD & DVD

Some indie games are inspired, some are just plain bobbins. *Anthony Holden* sorts the wheat from the chaff...



PROFESSOR FIZZWIZZLE

DEVELOPER Grubby Games **WEBSITE** www.grubbygames.com **PRICE** £11.39



SOME of the advanced levels are bastard hard.



THERE'S even a level editor when you're done with the 230 existing ones.

INDIEZONE GAME OF THE MONTH



A PUZZLE GAME that manages to balance fun game dynamics with a genuine mental challenge is rare, but *Professor Fizzwizzle* pulls it off with ease. With hints of classics such as *Sokoban* and *Chip's Challenge*, the game presents you with a series of floating 2D environments, each fraught with obstacles that must be overcome to reach an escape teleporter. Crates, barrels, pulleys, magnets, switches and ladders all play a part, as well as the odd Rage Bot to add a bit of urgency.

Part of the game's success is its huge range of challenges, with over 230 levels in three difficulty brackets. The bottom end is strictly for pre-schoolers and glue fiends, but in the advanced stages you get into some seriously devious, brain-bending territory.

Even when you're reduced to trial and error, the game retains plenty of charm thanks to cute visuals and music, but if frustration sets in there are animated solutions for every level. For a shareware puzzler, this is as good as it gets.

PCZONE 72



IF you look carefully, they're actually invading Sydney.

INVADAZOID

DEVELOPER Bantam City Games **WEBSITE** www.invadazoid.com **PRICE** $19.99 (£11.50)

WITH THE AUDIENCE for casual gaming demonstrating time and again its taste for simple, familiar ideas, indie developers looking to turn a buck are faced with a wretched choice. Either they do a recognisable take on a familiar retro favourite or they denounce creativity and make a colour-matching game. Neither option is very appealing, so a few indies have struck on a third path – combining two retro games into one.

Invadazoid is a prime example. An unashamed blend of *Space Invaders* and *Breakout*, it pits a curved paddle and ball against a horde of shuffling, swooping aliens. Mostly it works well, though the imperfect match results in one or two quirks. The need to keep the ball in play and avoid missiles, for example, often leads to unfair death – what happens when a missile reaches the ground the same point as the ball?

Despite this, it's a decent half-hour's diversion, and a lot better than another infernal *Bejeweled* clone.

PCZONE 54

ULTRATRON

DEVELOPER Puppy Games **WEBSITE** www.puppygames.net **PRICE** $9.99 (£5.70)

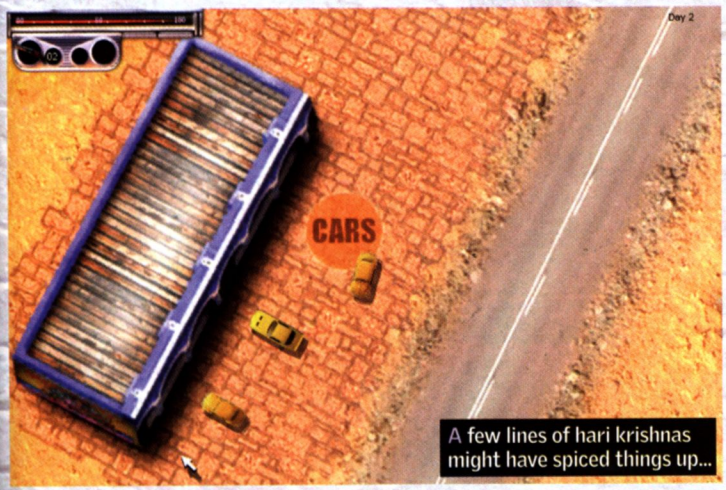
TO MANY, *ROBOTRON: 2084* is not just another lost piece of nostalgia from the arcade era. Nay, it's a veritable bastion of purity, an icon of old school high-score gaming. The concept: there's a roomful of robots trying to kill you and you have to kill them first. Sounds inane, but it was the eight-way shooting mechanic that made it great, plus the fact that if you trained hard you could become a real smart-arse at it.

Ultratron is the latest attempt to recapture such lost glories, and it does a damn fine job too, with sleek neon visuals and loads of character. It's the second *Robotron* homage from Puppy Games (the first being *Puppytron 2084*), this time cranking up the action with new bosses, power-ups and an extra helping of style. One of the nicer remakes around – and you can't fault the price.

PCZONE 70



NO humans to save, just hordes of evil robots.



A few lines of hari krishnas might have spiced things up...

MEXICAN MOTOR MAFIA

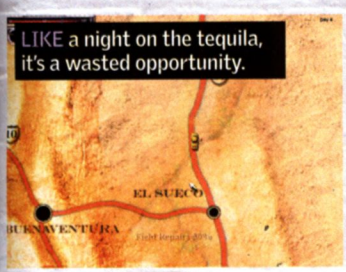
DEVELOPER Science Of Tomorrow Games
WEBSITE www.mexicanmotormafia.com
PRICE $16.99 (£9.80)

THIS IS A stylish little game, no doubt about it. Nice hand-drawn artwork, varied soundtrack, plenty of polish all round – just a shame it's so damn boring.

To look at, *Mexican Motor Mafia* is a south-of-the-border *Grand Theft Auto*, with matchbox cars zooming around a basic top-down world. Gameplay is a mixture of car-to-car shoot-outs and trading – you collect missions and weapons in the towns and then head out on the highway (aka: a rudimentary overhead map) to kick some bandito culo.

Unlike *GTA* however, the gameplay areas are quite small, being limited to a handful of tiny towns and a selection of random combat areas. What's more, the missions you're offered are extremely dull and repetitive, offering far too few tangible rewards and the combat is kinda clunky too. Back to the drawing board, ése.

PCZONE 55



LIKE a night on the tequila, it's a wasted opportunity.

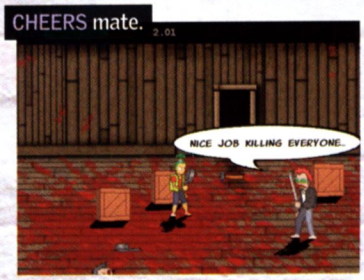

THE Mexican/*GTA* mix isn't a bad one, if any developers are reading.

ZOMBIE SMASHERS X2: PUNX AND SKINS

DEVELOPER Totally Screwed Software
WEBSITE zsx2.totallyscrewed.net **PRICE** $19.81 (£11.35)



CHEERS mate.




DISMEMBER enemies, then use their heads as weapons.

IN MANY WAYS this game is irremediably crap – and it knows it – but it's also got punk-rock attitude and humour to burn, and for this reason is very nearly great. Heavily inspired by Nintendo classic *River City Ransom*, *Zombie Smashers X2* (sequel to the more simplistic *Zombie Smashers X*) is a scrolling beat 'em up with a loosely freeform plot and RPG stat development. Choosing one of the five mohawked and tattooed Zombie Smashers, it's up to you to clear the streets of zombies, pirates, vampires, robots and ninjas, as well as eventually taking on the rival skinheads. Much of the fun to be had is with the over-the-top combat moves, which include ripping spines out, using freshly felled enemies as bludgeons and going on berzerker rampages. Technically it's still very bad, but it's such fun you can't help but like it.

PCZONE 57

BUDGET

Spent all your cash on women and wine? *Paul Presley* has the answer...



MASHED

PUBLISHER Xplosiv **WEBSITE** www.getmashed.net **PRICE** £9.99

THE BEST GAMES are those that reduce you to the mental age of ten. Flashing colours, plenty of speed and things 'sploding. Not to mention rubbing our victories in the faces of our friends. Playing *Mashed* with three mates, it's all you can do not to waggle your fingers on your nose and go "nerr, nerr!" whenever you win a round.

Think *Micro Machines* with death and you're on the right, ahem, track. Play is split into bite-size chunks, with you ham-fistedly trying to get from 0-60 faster than your rivals, all the while trying to steer round that bend, through that gap, not over that cliff edge and so on. Get far enough ahead to push your opponents off the bottom of the screen and you win some points. Yay, points! Staple of all gaming.

There are also weapons, power-ups, revenge fantasies and humour aplenty, which makes *Mashed* more fun that it really should be for what is essentially a PS2 game. Shallow, but good for parties. Those without EyeToys anyway.





FOR *Mashed* get, er, mashed.

BUDGET GAME OF THE MONTH

PCZONE 70



BRRRMMM! brrrmmm! etc.

BREED

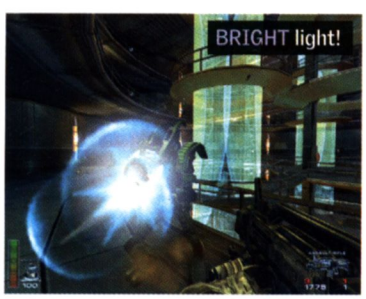
PUBLISHER Xplosiv **WEBSITE** www.breedgame.com **PRICE** £4.99

I THINK we can allow ourselves a slightly embarrassed titter at this one, a game that we briefly tried to convince ourselves would be the UK's answer to *Halo*. Of course, as history records, it turned out to be the UK's answer to boiled monkey gonads.

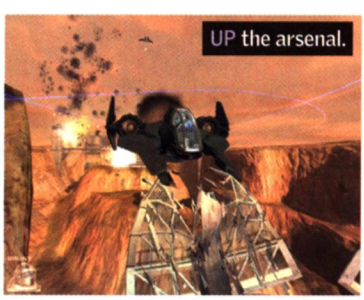
Not worthy to lick the Flood-guts off Master Chief's boots, it is, however, a *Halo*-wannabe, replete with space marines, mountable vehicles and sprawling alien landscapes. Unfortunately, it has none of the polish, finesse or style that Bungie's masterpiece demonstrated. Nor any of the fun, come to that.

Basically, *Breed* looked cutting-edge for about 40 minutes three years ago. By the time it came out it was not only outdated, but riddled with bugs, shoddy programming and some of the worst voice acting ever recorded. The squad AI is especially bad, causing your pals to commit suicide with alarming frequency. And while a fiver isn't that much to pay, a bad game is still a bad game.

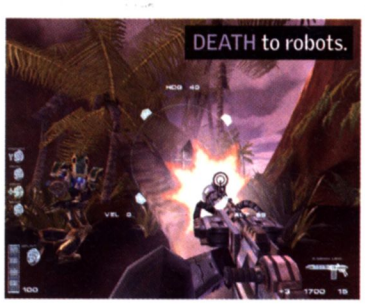
PCZONE 49



BRIGHT light!



UP the arsenal.



DEATH to robots.

THIS MONTH PCZONE SAVED MONEY BY...



Will found a stack of reduced steaks at Tescos:
Saving: £6.99

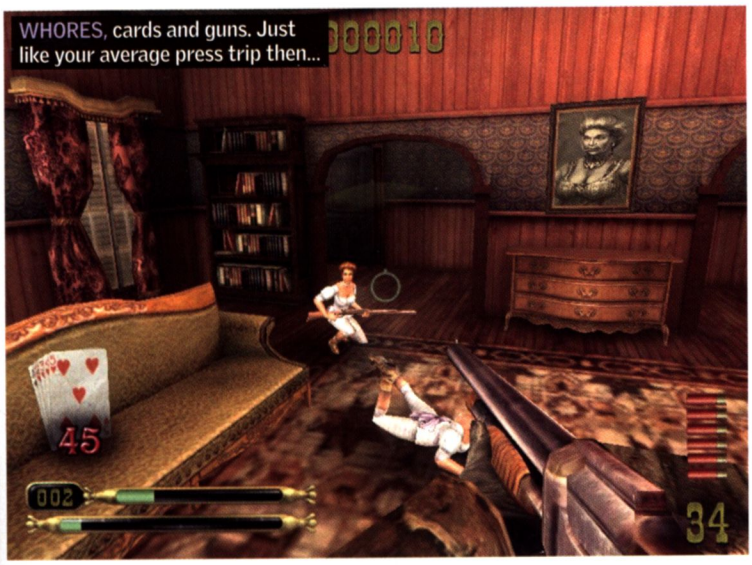
Sefton complained about his post and received five first-class stamps by way of compensation:
Saving: £1.50



Dave didn't get asked for a ticket on the bus:
Saving: £1.20

DEAD MAN'S HAND

PUBLISHER Sold Out **WEBSITE** www.humanhead.com **PRICE** £4.99



WHO SAYS THERE aren't enough Wild West games? There are two of the buggers in this month's budget section alone, which combined with the plethora of rootin' tootin' 'em ups in the main reviews over the past half a year brings the total to, er... two. Fine, it's a neglected genre. Not helped by games like this, a tepid mix of shoot-outs, poker mini-games and being an ornery bastard, seen through the medium of a third-rate engine that looked dated on the game's release back in 2004.

DMH is extremely limited in scope, betraying its console origins. There's a great western game waiting to be made (as proved by our *Frontier* entry in the recent 'Search For A Game' competition), but this isn't it.

PCZONE 41

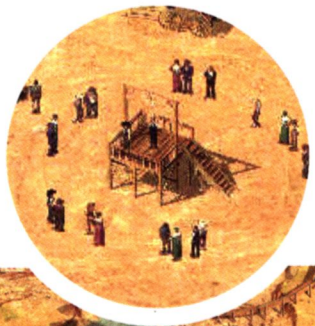
DESPERADOS

PUBLISHER Sold Out **WEBSITE** www.sold-out.co.uk **PRICE** £4.99

THIS, ON THE other hand, is quite a good little Wild West game, a sort of *Commandos* with Stetsons. Six unique characters (unless you've seen any ensemble cowboy films) form your posse, shooting, sneaking, sashaying and knife-wielding their way through a range of cinematic missions, bringing a gang of train robbers to justice and requiring more thought than just where to aim your guns.

It's looking ancient now (it came out in 2001), but still plays well enough to warrant spending a fiver. Level design is excellent, with many routes through to your objective and loads of hidden touches upping the replay factor. It's from the old 'trial and error' school of gameplay though, so expect frequent use of the quick-save button and many hours of teeth gnashing as a carefully laid out plan goes awry.

PCZONE 74







And the rest...

Old games + cheap prices = budget heaven (or sometimes hell)



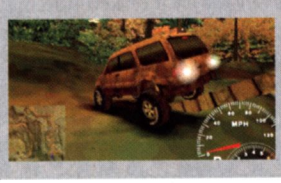
GALACTIC CIVILISATION
£4.99, Xplosiv
Civilization in space, which is either a good or terrifying thing depending on your taste for gaming hardcore's edge. Not pretty to look at and sometimes a sprawling unmanageable mess, this can still be extremely rewarding if you put in the time.

PCZONE 70



CRAZY TAXI 3
£4.99, Xplosiv
Sega's sagging arcade racer is starting to look pretty tired now the original's novelty factor has worn off. Already released once on budget at a tenner, this is now 50 per cent less expensive and a million per cent less enjoyable than its predecessors.

PCZONE 31



CABELA'S 4X4 OFF-ROAD ADVENTURE
£4.99, Xplosiv
Confusing mix of driving challenges across bumpy terrain that rewards caution and careful driving rather than flooring the pedal and going hell for leather. Simplistic fun, from the same team that brought you *Cabela's Dangerous Hunts*, whatever that is.

PCZONE 55

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



1

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
£9.99, Focus Multimedia
Glorious storytelling, engaging gameplay and the greenest lips in all of gaming-dom make the badly overlooked *BG&E* a must-buy. Deep, imaginative, brilliant.



2

SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII
£12.99, Codemasters
One of the finest recent strategy titles, *Soldiers* is a near-perfect blend of tactical thought, balls-out action and historical accuracy. War can be good.



3

BLACK & WHITE
£4.99, Sold Out
Molyneux's opus split opinion on release, but at this price you can't fault its ambition and gameplay. Monkey slapping has never been so cheap.



4

CIVILIZATION III
£9.99, Atari
Sid Meier, a genius of modern times. The *Civ* series continues to eat valuable life hours from us like no other game. The graphics are still a bit shit though.



5

FREELANCER
£9.99, Xplosiv
The space sim reborn! Thrills, spills and probably gills in this all-action, freeform universe of spaceships and trading. The 'fun' alternative to *X2: The Threat*.



YOUR SHOUT!

Speak your brains on the latest releases...

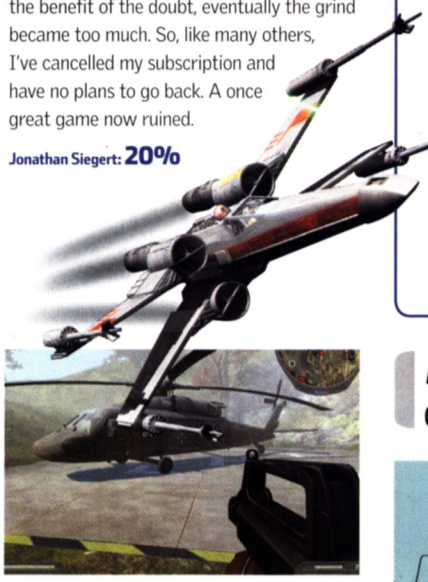


STAR WARS GALAXIES

OUR SCORE: 57%

Thank you! Finally someone has detailed all the problems that have plagued *SWG* since the Combat Upgrade went live. I saw literally months of work get flushed down the toilet when my Jedi character was 'tweaked' to fit SOE's plans and even though I gave the game the benefit of the doubt, eventually the grind became too much. So, like many others, I've cancelled my subscription and have no plans to go back. A once great game now ruined.

Jonathan Siegert: 20%



BATTLEFIELD 2

OUR SCORE: 94%

Sorry, but I find *Battlefield 2* the pits: it has more bugs than an NHS hospital. On my new high-spec PC, the guy who talks stutters all the time. I've lowered the resolution and the textures, but to no avail – and why should I have to do this on a ten-week-old PC anyway?

BF2 is no improvement on *BF1942*, which has much better maps and more variety. I've now installed the latest patch which has made it even worse (screen freezes and other bugs). I'm now back to playing *BF1942* with the *Desert Combat* mod which is great.

James Sprott: 30%

YOU DO THE REVIEWS!

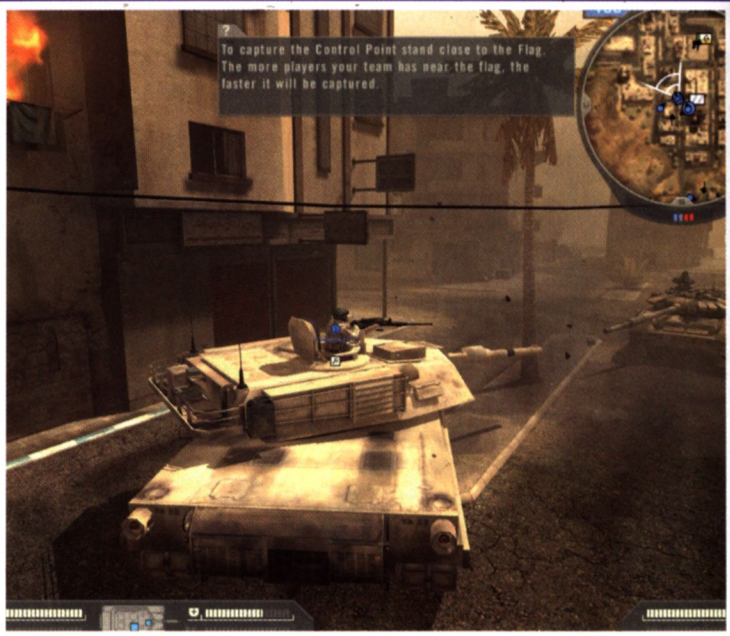
Think our reviews stink the place out? Think you can do better? Yeah? Put your money where your mouth is and send us a review of a recently released game and if it's good enough, we'll print it here. If it's woefully tragic, we might print it anyway and ridicule you in front of the whole nation. Keep your reviews between 100-150 words if you don't want us to chop bits out randomly and ruin your prose, and make sure you provide us with a score out of 100 and your full name and contact details. Oh, and each and every single review printed wins a *PC ZONE* goodie bag, which aren't available in any shops.*

Send your reviews to: yourshout@pczone.co.uk, with 'Your Shout' in the subject line.

Or use pen and paper and send them to: *PC ZONE*, Your Shout, Future, 99 Baker St, London, W1U 6FP.

* No-one would take them off our hands.

Review of the Month



BATTLEFIELD 2

OUR SCORE: 94%

As far as single-player goes, *Battlefield 2* is rubbish. I know it's mainly multiplayer, but I had really hoped that DICE would have beefed up the solo play, rather than make it weaker. The bots are damn stupid too – taking on a tank with a knife comes to mind, not to mention their love of misplaced artillery. Then there's the fact that no more than three bots will join a squad, so there's too many low-member squads. Plus, 32-player limit? I found out how to increase it and the game still ran smoothly. *BF2* looks excellent and plays better than *BF1942*, but it's more of the same, finely-tuned to make it more fun than before. MP great, SP crud.

Paul Hoey: 76%

Battlefield 2's bots are stupid. Taking on a tank with a knife comes to mind



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

OUR SCORE: 92%

Great game, but *San Andreas* isn't a patch on *Vice City*. Maybe if I hadn't played *VC* to death and discovered every last secret I might have enjoyed *SA* more. But this time, the setting seems too restricted to the gang wars of CJ's crew. I'm not a fan of hip hop either. What about a little jazz?

Miles Greydon: 87%



SWAT 4

OUR SCORE: 86%

What a brilliant game! I don't mean single-player (although that's good too). No, co-op is where the real fun is hidden! Nothing beats working as a close-knit team, watching each others' backs and taking down a room full of 'perps' with a well-placed gas grenade. I'd say a classic, easily.

Pete Laird: 95%

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BUYER'S GUIDE

The mag may have changed, but the latest and greatest PC releases certainly haven't...

PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES YOU SHOULDN'T TOUCH WITH A SHITTY STICK

1. **CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5** PCZ ISSUE: 154
2. **SINGLES 2: TRIPLE TROUBLE** PCZ ISSUE: 157
3. **STOLEN** PCZ ISSUE: 156
4. **YETISPORTS ARCTIC ADVENTURE** PCZ ISSUE: 158
5. **PIPPA FUNNELL: THE STUD FARM INHERITANCE** PCZ ISSUE: 155

PCZONE TOP 5 RACING GAMES

1. **GTR** PCZ ISSUE: 153
2. **TOCA RACE DRIVER 2** PCZ ISSUE: 142
3. **NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 2** PCZ ISSUE: 150
4. **LIVE FOR SPEED** PCZ ISSUE: 158
5. **TRACKMANIA SUNRISE** PCZ ISSUE: 154



PCZONE TOP 5 CONSOLEY SHOOTERS

1. **STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO** PCZ ISSUE: 152
2. **THE SUFFERING** PCZ ISSUE: 145
3. **HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED** PCZ ISSUE: 135
4. **PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY** PCZ ISSUE: 152
5. **PROJECT SNOWBLIND** PCZ ISSUE: 155

BUDGET



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 – 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillys is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.

BUDGET



BLACK & WHITE
PCZ Issue: 100 – 95%

It's had its critics, but we still rate it as one of the most important PC titles of recent years. With its creatures, its miracle making and its name-whispering oddities, for scope and vision there's not much to match Molyneux's vision.



BROTHERS IN ARMS
PCZ Issue: 153 – 87%

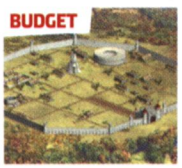
We love *Brothers In Arms* for its alternate approach to WWII first-person shooting and hide 'n' flank tactics. We expect more from the sequel, but still thoroughly enjoy our *BIA* ambles through war-torn Normandy.



CALL OF DUTY
PCZ Issue: 136 – 94%

The definitive war-shooter, full of bombast, brutality and the rare FPS feeling that every bullet counts. It manages to conjure up feelings of awe, exhilaration and real fear – shooters rarely get this raw.

BUDGET



CIVILIZATION III
PCZ Issue: 111 – 86%

What buyer's guide omits Meier's masterpiece? The *Civilization* series has been the backbone of PC gaming for years – they're simply the most addictive, compulsive and overtly playable strategy games ever made.



CITY OF HEROES
PCZ Issue: 155 – 86%

Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beams shooting from your eyes. This super-powered MMO lets you live all those heroic fantasies to the full, along with your mates. Nietzsche would have a field day.

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2
PCZ Issue: 148 – 97%

Everyone knew this would be good, but no one quite expected the tour de force that Valve managed to pull off. Easily a contender for the best game of all time, *Half-Life 2* is just one stunning set piece after another, and is guaranteed to leave you dribbling with awe. Be warned though, an online connection is needed for Valve's mandatory Steam online delivery service.

BUDGET



DEUS EX
PCZ Issue: 93 – 94%

This remains the benchmark in FPS role-players. Weaving, twisting sci-fi plots, exciting freeform level design and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama help retain *Deus Ex* as the Alpha male of the gaming world.



DOOM 3
PCZ Issue: 146 – 90%

Highly polished entry into the *Doom* triptych that put off many with its back-to-basics corridor-upon-corridor approach. It's relentless, but it's also a great game – full of thrills, monsters and knowing nods to id's back catalogue.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
PCZ Issue: 116 – 94%

Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played in the past few years – the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



EVE ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 130 – 88%

Elite Online has been a long-held gaming fantasy and this multiplayer space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the amount of options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy – it's up to you.



EVERQUEST II
PCZ Issue: 150 – 95%

A *Star Trek* to *World Of Warcraft*'s *Star Wars*, *EQII* gives the original 3D MMO a much needed lick of paint, a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A time-sink in the true, classic sense.



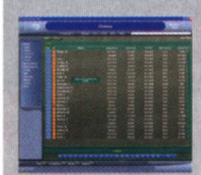
EVIL GENIUS
PCZ Issue: 147 – 84%

Ever wanted to say something like "No Mr Bond, I expect you to die", or create a vast underground complex filled with men in boiler suits? Well now you can – with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.



FAR CRY
PCZ Issue: 140 – 93%

In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outweighs even the mighty *Half-Life 2* in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freeform action and the best sniping money can buy.



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005
PCZ Issue: 149 – 90%

Now rid of the Champ Man tag, Sports Interactive has continued to ladle goodness upon goodness into *Football Manager* – and it remains the premium creator of late-night manage-athons.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PCZ Issue: 155 – 92%

To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this – a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious – *San Andreas* is the summit of gaming achievement.

Must buy!



ROME: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 148 – 93%

Once upon a time, all strategy games were visual abortions and strictly for the hardcore (OK, a bit of a sweeping statement). But *Rome: Total War* (and its predecessors) changed all that, mixing a breathtaking 3D engine with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic, as well as a staggering degree of historical accuracy. The result is a certified masterpiece and a strategy game just about anyone can enjoy. Hell, how many other games are made into TV shows?



GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS
PCZ Issue 143 – 84%

Despite a few AI glitches, *GCII* is a great game if you prefer tactics to boring old resource management. A superb sci-fi effort with some intense freeform missions. Strat-fans should check it out.



GUILD WARS
PCZ Issue: 156 – 94%

A lesson in how to make an impenetrable gaming genre (MMOs) accessible to the masses. It shines with polish, thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based setup.



JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING
PCZ Issue: 145 – 83%

If snipers piss you off then don't bother, but there's fun aplenty to be found in Novalogic's online shooter, with games of up to 150 soldiers zooming over some massive maps.



KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
PCZ Issue: 137 – 94%

KOTOR is the best *Star Wars* game (and indeed RPG) of recent years. Moving, dramatic and surprisingly adult in its tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
PCZ Issue: 149 – 91%

Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 – 93%

The chosen poison for certain *PCZ* staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of joy-through-excessive-destruction on the market.



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
PCZ Issue: 118 – 91%

It may not have the depth of *Fallout*, but the customisation options in this are so extensive that it's been granted an extremely long life on the Interweb. Still a wonderfully immersive game.



BUDGET

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT
PCZ Issue: 86 – 87%

Planescape is the definitive PC isometric RPG. Compelling storylines, great characterisation and a heart of pure darkness – the best thing Interplay's Black Isle studios ever gave us.



PLANETSIDE
PCZ Issue: 131 – 82%

The dream was always of a massively multiplayer war, and *PlanetSide*'s attempts to make it real offer some of the most intense future war action ever. True, there are plenty of irksome niggles, but when it works...



BUDGET

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
PCZ Issue: 136 – 84%

Maybe we're not manly enough, but we still prefer *POP*'s first outing. No, the combat isn't up to much, but the warmth, wisdom and charming inter-character banter far exceeds its sequel.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
PCZ Issue: 149 – 89%

The finest arcade football gamer ever. Fact. No game even comes close. Bringing bile, tears, joy and rapture to PCs up and down the country, it's the definitive soccer sim.



PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 – 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker – *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling tour de force.



RISE OF NATIONS
PCZ Issue: 129 – 90%

One of the best of the 'last generation' of Empire builders, *Rise Of Nations* – coupled with exemplary expansion pack *Thrones And Patriots* – is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the *Civ* genre.

Must buy!



BATTLEFIELD 2
PCZ Issue: 157 – 94%

If it's online action you want, look no further. *BF2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting. Everything that made the original *BF1942* so good has been retained – the map design, vehicles, ever-evolving frontline, etc – then mixed with huge 64-player maps, squad commands and commander modes and a contemporary setting that gives everything a feeling of weight and importance. Truly the best of the best.



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!
PCZ Issue: 149 – 88%

If you've got some downtime at the close of the day, then *Pirates!* is the most relaxing (and swashbuckling) game around. Drifting around the Caribbean with a flotilla of ships and mischief on your mind is escapism at its finest.



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
PCZ Issue 154 – 91%

A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well established spies vs mercs multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



SWAT 4
PCZ Issue: 154 – 86%

SWAT 4 is a tactical squad shooter that sings. Dark in places, brutal in others, it's the only shooter that allows you to Tazer old ladies and drown them in pepper spray. Probably the best co-op experience around to boot.



THE SIMS 2
PCZ Issue: 147 – 82%

Even the most churlish of gamers couldn't grant *The Sims* recognition of both gaming cleverness and achievement. Mass-market it may be, and as unlikely as we are to play it, it still deserves a place in the Buyer's Guide.



THE SUFFERING
PCZ Issue: 145 – 84%

An absolute revelation when it came up for review; the darkness, the shocks and the ingenious set pieces made *The Suffering*'s decayed prison a necessary play for those who want a taste of violence.



TRIBES: VENGEANCE
PCZ Issue 147 – 87%

A slick, novel game that we love due to its clever and immaculately conceived jetpack 'n' gun solo campaign. Multiplayer servers aren't as populated as they might be, but this remains an overlooked gem.



THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
PCZ Issue: 144 – 85%

Deadly Shadows not only brings *Thief*'s sneak n' steal mantra bang up to date, but also has some of the best level design in living memory. Play through The Cradle and you'll know true fear.



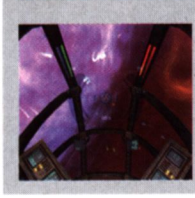
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
PCZ Issue: 138 – 91%

UT2004 packs so much punch, you'd be hard pushed to find a flaw. Team games, deathmatches, tactical thinking in the Onslaught mode – everything the sci-fi shoot 'em up fan could want.



WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PCZ Issue: 152 – 95%

Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake an enchanted shitty stick at.



X2: THE THREAT
PCZ Issue: 138 – 92%

Mesmerising in its detail and beauty, *X2* is the best modern-day *Elite* that the gaming world has managed to produce. More than a little intimidating to the casual gamer, the scope for exploration seems limitless.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

September

BET ON SOLDIER	DIGITAL JESTERS
DUNGEON SIEGE II	MICROSOFT
FAHRENHEIT	ATARI
F.E.A.R.	VU GAMES
MOTOGP: ULTIMATE RACING TECHNOLOGY 3	THQ
SNIPER: ELITE	UBISOFT
THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND	MIDWAY
WARHAMMER 40K: WINTER ASSAULT	THQ

October

BLACK & WHITE 2	EA
BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD	UBISOFT
CONFLICT: GLOBAL TERROR	SCI
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5	KONAMI
ROME: TOTAL WAR – BARBARIAN INVASION	ACTIVISION
SPELLFORCE II: BLEND OF PERFECTION	JOWOOD
STARGATE: SG1 – THE ALLIANCE	JOWOOD
STARSHIP TROOPERS	EMPIRE
TOTAL OVERDOSE	SCI

November

CALL OF DUTY 2	ACTIVISION
HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE	EA
PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG	UBISOFT
PRINCE OF PERSIA 3	UBISOFT
RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR	MIDWAY
THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO	ATARI
X3: REUNION	DEEP SILVER

Q3 2005

FABLE: THE LOST CHAPTERS	MICROSOFT
HALF-LIFE 2: AFTERMATH	VALVE
SERIOUS SAM 2	TAKE 2
STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II	ACTIVISION
STUBBS THE ZOMBIE	ASPYR
THE MOVIES	ACTIVISION

Q4 2005

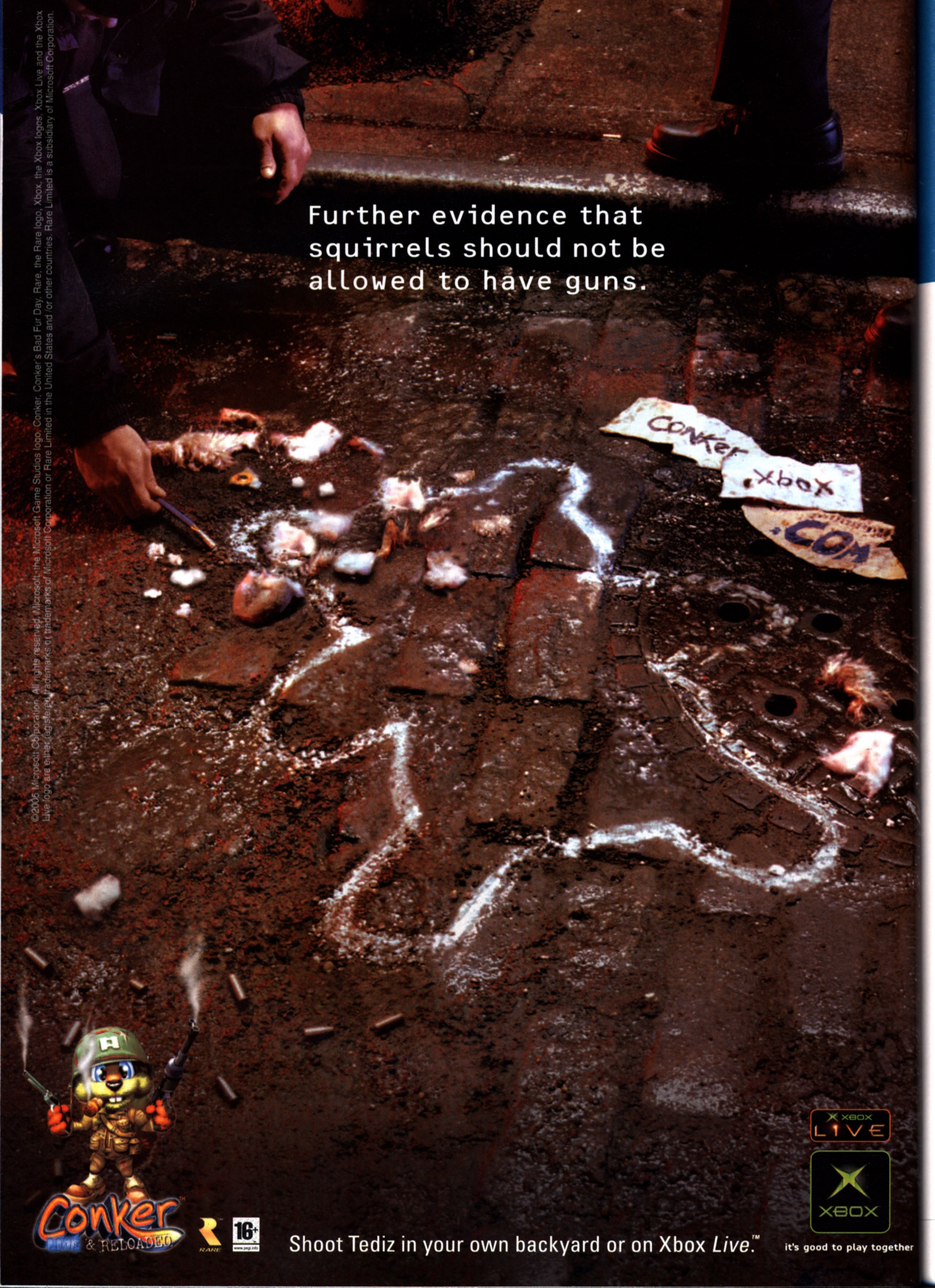
AGE OF EMPIRES III	MICROSOFT
CIVILIZATION IV	TAKE 2
ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION	TAKE 2
GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER	UBISOFT
GT LEGENDS	TBA
QUAKE IV	ACTIVISION
SIN: EPISODES	VALVE/STEAM
VIETCONG 2	TAKE 2

2005

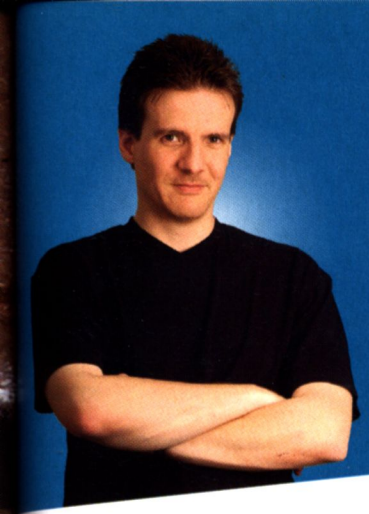
ADVENT RISING	TBA
PSYCHONAUTS	TBA

2006

BIOSHOCK	TBA
CONDEMNED: CRIMINAL ORIGINS	SEGA
COMPANY OF HEROES	THQ
ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS	ACTIVISION
LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II	EA
JUST CAUSE	EIDOS
HELLGATE: LONDON	NAMCO
HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY	EIDOS
PREY	TAKE 2
RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS	MICROSOFT
SPORE	EA
STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL	THQ
SUPREME COMMANDER	THQ
STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR	ACTIVISION
THE GODFATHER	EA
TOCA RACE DRIVER 3	CODEMASTERS
TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND	EIDOS
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007	MIDWAY



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HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

HARDWARE EDITOR Phil Wand

Out of the box

I RECENTLY BOUGHT a new PC. Ordering couldn't have been easier, and although the delivery charge was high the overall cost was low. But I soon got to see how it was all so cheap – the machine I'd bought was infested with trial versions of third-party software. I resolved to send the company a letter of complaint, but after realising it would achieve nothing I decided to imagine that I'd written to them and that this was their response. See what you think.

Dear Mr Wand,

Thank you for your letter regarding your purchase of a Dumbension 3000. We do not produce a Dumbension, and I have assumed you were referring to our award-winning Dimension range. I have also assumed you were referring to us wherever you said "artful tossers".

As you are no doubt aware, the Dimension you purchased was on a limited offer at under £300. For the cost of a video card, you and other cheap-arse bastards are enjoying a powerful 3.06GHz desktop computer complete with 17-inch flat panel monitor, keyboard and optical mouse.

I do appreciate that proficient users such as yourself do not need AOL Coach, AOL Connectivity Services, AOL Spyware Protection, AOL You've Got Pictures Screensaver, ArtEuro, Paint Shop Photo Album, Paint Shop Pro, Learn2 Player, Tiscali Internet, Wanadoo Europe, Sonic RecordNow Audio, Sonic RecordNow Copy, Sonic RecordNow Data, Sonic Update Manager, RealPlayer and Norton Internet Security preinstalled, but for that price who bloody cares.

Yours sincerely

Vanguard P Toothpaste

A Computer Company

CLOCKING UP A STORM

New Radeon card will battle 7800 GTX head on



UNLIKE the 7800 GTX, the new Radeon will be a dual slot design.

ATI HAS SOME catching up to do. With the GeForce 7800 GTX designed around NVIDIA's all-new G70 architecture and serving up twice the performance of the 6800 Ultra, not only has the X850 XT Platinum Edition been forced to hand over its speed crown, it has also been made to look over-priced, underpowered and a little bit last year.

As luck would have it, the red corner has something up its sleeve. Known only as R520, the new ATI chip is likely to run at a stratospheric 700MHz or more and should launch early this autumn. Reports suggest the chip has been delayed as the company fought to resolve heat and quality problems, but it's just as likely that the processor is being tweaked to beat the GeForce.

One thing that may deter prospective purchasers is the fact that the R520 will be a dual-slot card, similar in appearance to the old Platinum Editions. NVIDIA has been very deliberate about keeping the GTX single-slot, believing the success of the 6800 GT was due in part to the card's slimline design. And there was me thinking it was because it was fast and cheap.

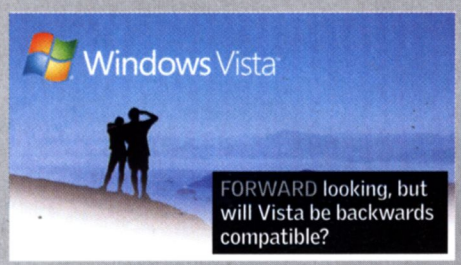
Here's hoping ATI knows what it's doing.

PRICE £TBA **ETA** Autumn

WEBSITE www.ati.com

BUENA VISTA

Windows Longhorn gets a real name



FORWARD looking, but will Vista be backwards compatible?

As Whistler became XP, so Longhorn will become Vista. Microsoft has announced the official name of the next version of Windows, and it's due out in the latter half of next year, five years after the release of XP.

The Vista launch introduced the slogan, 'Clear, Confident, Connected', in reference to the operating system's new interface, its total security overhaul, and its interoperability with other devices in and around your house. Vista will also feature a new graphical rendering technology and brand new file system. With Windows found on the vast majority of PCs worldwide, Microsoft can't afford to get it wrong.

PRICE £TBA **ETA** 2006 **WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/windowsvista

NEWS ROUND-UP

NVIDIA GeForce 7 Series

The GeForce 7800 GT is an important card for NVIDIA. It will ultimately replace the legendary 6800 GT, a product that has been one of our favourites since its launch, combining value and performance like no other. The fact you can drop two GTs onto the one motherboard for an instant speed hike made it even more appealing. Luckily, the 20-pipeline 7800 GT looks to be the same mix of high power and low price, beating all 6800 variants in early benchmarks. Expect it to go on sale at around £300 later this month.

be*

Launching shortly, Be Unlimited is a broadband ISP that will offer a dizzy 24MB/s for £30 a month, wireless router included. But I'm not holding my breath. Multinational BT promised a free 2MB/s upgrade to every customer in July, and weeks later many of us remain stuck with 512KB/s. Which makes 24MB/s from a startup seem rather unlikely. There's also the possibility that Be will 'do a Bulldog' and drown under the demand, but why not sign up at www.bethere.co.uk and see what happens?

WARNING: THIS MONTH'S HARD WORDS

CRACKED BY STEVE HILL

SPYWARE: The latest fashion items and accoutrements for budding secret agents. You know, hats and that. **RAM UPGRADE**: The installation of Really Ace Memory, which enables your computer to remember more stuff. **MOTHERBOARD**: A deep-seated psychological condition whereby middle-aged women become dissatisfied with their daily existence. **G70 ARCHITECTURE**: An avant-garde approach to building design, introduced in the '70s by a man called Graham. **PSU**: A machine that plugs into your telly and plays virtual reality 3D computer video games. **TOTAL RMS POWER**: The absolute authority claimed by members of the long-standing Real Miners' Strike.

AREA 51 3500

PRICE £854 inc. **MANUFACTURER** Alienware
PHONE 0800 279 9751
WEBSITE www.alienware.co.uk

"GIVE US A hand, mate," says the man, his finger still leaning on my buzzer. I hesitate for a moment. When a DHL guy is bent double at your door, the sweat on his forehead twinkling at you like a dance hall chandelier, he's either having a coronary or you're having an Alienware. I ask if he needs an ambulance, then put down my tea and step outside.

The container we heave off the van and shuffle over the tarmac is at least three feet tall and feels like some joker filled it with water. Unwieldy, imposing and prone to leaving dents in your carpet, it won't go through your loft hatch and the logo on the side turns it into a status symbol. So it'll end up in the garage, or at the back of the spare bedroom, where jealous visitors will make barbed comments about how much money you have and hope in secret that you get hit by a bus.

But the Area 51 3500 can be yours for Dell prices, so you don't have to be a rich bastard to afford one. And while this entry-level model is more pleasure craft than power boat, with a mid-range processor and video card, it's still pretty fast. And it's still an Alienware. It has that famous voluptuous case with those slanted, glow-in-the-dark eyes. It offers glamour, pleasure, envious mates, a free T-shirt, plus the company's top-rated 24/7 service and support. And all for a lot less than a grand. The only thing missing is a screen, so make sure you budget for a decent 17in flat panel and don't be afraid to shop around for it.

On that same subject, I have a suggestion. While the Area 51 3500's benchmarks are reasonable, serving up very playable games of *Battlefield 2*, *Half-Life 2*, *Far Cry* or *Doom 3*, it makes more sense to delete the graphics card from the standard configuration, thereby trimming over £100 from the price, and to put the money towards a Radeon X800 XL from a third-party retailer instead. Then it's more like the Alienware you always promised yourself.



HELP!

If it all goes wrong, who will put it right?

One of the problems when buying from a big name brand is that its support department will likely be in India, and the person you end up speaking to will be reading prompts from a screen. Regardless of how good they are, Indian employees are cheap. Cheap employees means cheaper computers, so think about that the next time you find yourself a bargain.

Consider one of my 'favourite' brands, Dell. Earlier this year, the company confirmed it would be adding 2,000 staff to its call centres in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mohal. Consider also the cheap labour at its Eldorado do Sul, Penang and Xiamen manufacturing plants, and those unbelievable low prices become a bit more believable.

And what of Alienware? The company prides itself on its support, but it's not hard to find rants on websites and forums from someone who'd never buy the name again.

But before you get dissuaded, remind yourself that it's easy to find complaints about any manufacturer and that you shouldn't take someone else's Internet crusade too seriously. When placing an order, phone the company direct and ask how long you'll have to wait before delivery. Ask about its support, and find out if the product is due for replacement any time soon. Only then should you open your wallet.

SPECIFICATION

ASUS P5GD1-VM Motherboard, Pentium 4 3.0GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, NVIDIA GeForce 6600 GT, Intel Azalia 5.1 Audio (Onboard), Seagate 80GB HDD, Windows XP Home Edition, LITE-ON DVD/CD-RW Drive

BENCHMARKS? You can find the full gory details on the DVD. They're far too dull to print here!



PCZONE
VALUE • PERFORMANCE
84

XA2021

PRICE £23 inc. **MANUFACTURER** Altec Lansing
PHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.alteclansing.com

THE XA3021 SYSTEM from a few years back was great, giving you the punchy charm of Altec's premium surround system, but with the rear and centre channels missing and the price lopped in half.

I had high hopes for the XA2021s, and although they're better than the stylish but shallow Genius SW-Flat2.1 1250s, they remain wishy-washy and never manage to interest your ears. With the volume turned up, they produce a treble-centric sound that induces headaches and makes you wish you'd not been such a tight arse.

The VS3151R system, which costs £30 more, offers significantly better audio quality and doesn't require aspirin.



SPECIFICATION

2.1 audio, headphone socket, rotary volume control, rotary subwoofer control, auxiliary input, rated 17W total RMS power

PCZONE VALUE • PERFORMANCE **78**

SW-FLAT 2.1 1250

PRICE £46 inc. **MANUFACTURER** Genius
PHONE 020 8664 2710
WEBSITE www.geniusnet.co.uk

IT'S 1989. INDIANA Jones is showing and I buy my first mouse from an unknown Taiwanese outfit called Genius. Today the company offers a large range of peripherals from wireless access points and scanners to speakers.

The SW-Flat 2.1 1250 speakers on test claim 1250W peak music power and, according to the small print, 37W RMS. Both these terms are meaningless, so if you were hoping to wake the dead you'll be disappointed. You'll also be let-down by the sound quality, which is tinny and lacks substance. Listening to music, games and films, I'm reminded why I'm not a fan of ineffectual satellite speakers propped up by a huge bass cabinet.

A better choice would be Creative's Inspire T3000.

SPECIFICATION

2.1 audio, headphone socket, wired remote, rotary volume control, rotary subwoofer control, auxiliary input, rated 37W total RMS power



PCZONE VALUE • PERFORMANCE **73**

T7700

PRICE £99 inc. **MANUFACTURER** Creative
PHONE N/A
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

CREATIVE IS BEST known for its Sound Blaster products and speakers, but it has also been doing PC audio longer than anyone. In audiophile circles, the Creative brand would be considered a lesser name, yet it regularly sees off some seriously snooty competition.

The T7700 speaker system is one such example. Although no longer on sale, you can still pick them up on eBay and from retailers with a few leftover boxes.

Like my everlasting P5800 speakers, which are only turned off during power cuts, the T7700s produce a rich and full sound from any source. Like the Altec Lansing VS3151Rs, they lack a hardware decoder – you'll need the £150 TD7700s for that – but if you have the feature on your sound card there's no need to spend more.



SPECIFICATION

7.1 audio, headphone socket, wired remote, rotary volume control, rotary subwoofer control, auxiliary input, rated 92W total RMS power

PCZONE VALUE • PERFORMANCE **80**

Z-5500

PRICE £220 inc. **MANUFACTURER** Logitech
PHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

STARTING WITH THE XA2021s, the speakers on this page have been following a pattern: doubling price and volume, stumbling on scores.

Here the price clears the £200 barrier and the power nips past 500W. Although it might seem unfair to compare a high-priced, high-powered monster with products costing a fraction as much, they all do the same job. What matters is whether they're worth the extra.

The Z-5500 is the best sounding system on test. Comparing it to the others is like comparing nausea with an orgasm. The speakers make games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon start blowing the dust from old CDs and DVDs just to revel in the sound. But £220? A bit much.



SPECIFICATION

5.1 audio, headphone socket, wired remote, rotary volume control, rotary subwoofer control, auxiliary input, rated 505W total RMS power

PCZONE VALUE • PERFORMANCE **89**

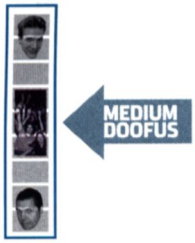
HOW TO...
GO WIRELESS

Phil Wand **shows you how easy it is to go surfing over the airwaves**

Need:
Wireless networking card, Wireless modem router, network cable, screwdriver

Time
45 minutes

Difficulty level



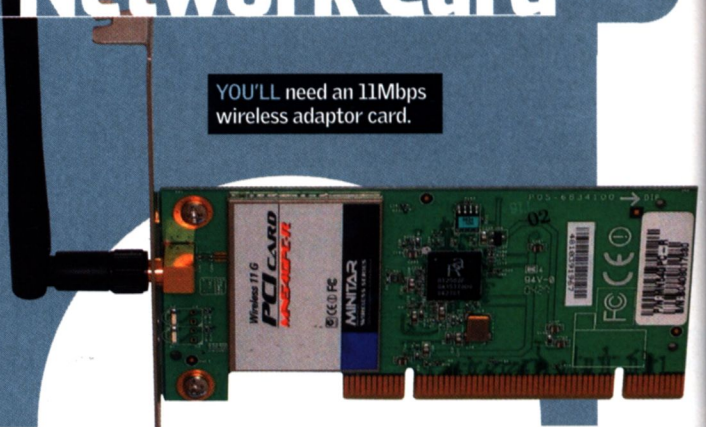
IF YOU HAVE a few computers networked together at home, there's a high chance you're getting sick of cables stretching from room to room. Maybe your girlfriend has threatened that either they go or she does. Even if you have just the one machine you're still shackled to the phone socket. But there is another way.

Wireless, or Wi-Fi. The heart of this kind of network is the base station, but these days it's possible to down four or more birds with the latest in modern, er, stones. The DrayTek Vigor is one such product – wireless, router, firewall, and ADSL modem combined. Plug it into your phone socket and away you go – any computer with a wireless networking card, Macintosh or PC, can connect to the Internet from anywhere in your house.

01 Wireless Network Card

Adding a wireless network card is a matter of shutting down your PC, whipping the back off and then pushing the card into a spare slot. When you put the lid back on and start up, Windows XP should take care of the software installation thanks to Plug & Play, but don't panic if it doesn't – all wireless cards come with a driver CD. (If you've got a laptop you can go back to your latte and carry on thinking smug thoughts – all modern laptops come with wireless built-in and it's a cinch to use a suitable PC card if yours doesn't.)

YOU'LL need an 11Mbps wireless adaptor card.







802.11G?
This is the current wireless standard, offering a maximum of 54Mbit/s. If you don't see it, look elsewhere. 802.11a and b are older, with slower speeds, but are also offered for backwards compatibility. Coming up on the horizon is 802.11n, which offers higher speeds, but be warned, early models of new standards have a history of being incompatible.

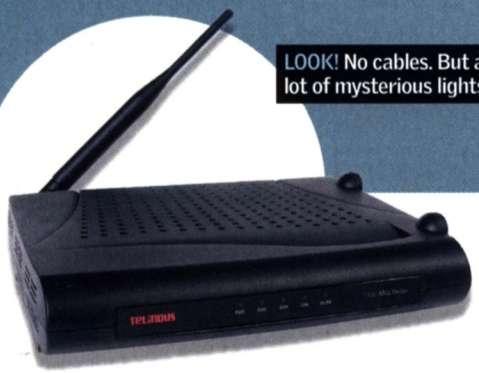
RECEPTION
Manufacturers' claims for the speed and range only apply to ideal circumstances. Put a few walls and ceilings between your router and your PC and you'll see things slowing down or dropping out altogether – use your wireless card's configuration utility to check the signal strength and don't be surprised to see it slightly less than amazing.

WARNING: CYBER-SQUATTERS ARE EVERYWHERE

Wireless networks by default allow anyone to connect to them. This is convenient but it's also as good an idea as leaving your front door open when you're out shopping. And putting up a big sign saying "help yourself to my stuff!" Maybe you like your neighbours and feel public-spirited in offering your Internet connection to anyone passing, but be careful. If anything dodgy is downloaded using your connection you might have a job convincing les garcons en bleu that it wasn't you. SET YOUR WEP KEY! Was that not clear enough? SET YOUR WEP KEY!!

02 Wireless Router

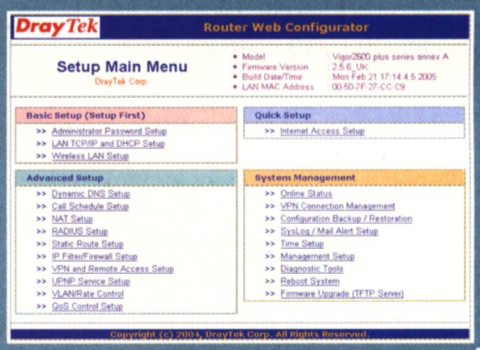
When you fire up your new DrayTek router, it'll sit there winking mysterious lights at you. Decorative, hypnotic even, but not very constructive. On a good day, your computer's freshly-installed wireless card and the router may discover one another and unite in a passionate embrace, but what you'll probably get is the blinking lights and bugger all else.



LOOK! No cables. But a lot of mysterious lights...

03 Connecting

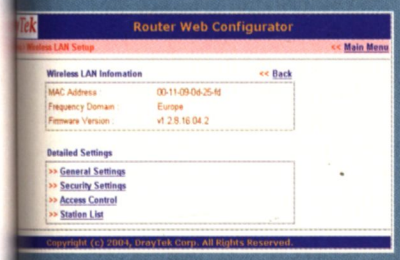
If you can stand the irony, what you have to do now is use a network cable to connect your PC to the router. Right-click on My Network Places on your desktop and choose Properties, then do the same for your Local Area Connection, double-click the Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) entry and make sure you've set Windows to obtain its address automatically. Click OK and visit 192.168.1.1 in your web browser, entering the username and the password from the manual when requested.

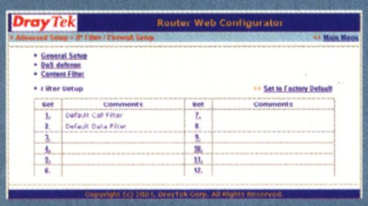


04 Setup!

The wizard's here to help! Leave anything you don't understand on the default settings – you can always change them later...

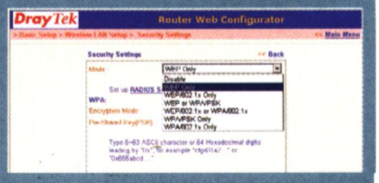
1 You'll need your username and password as supplied to you by your ISP.





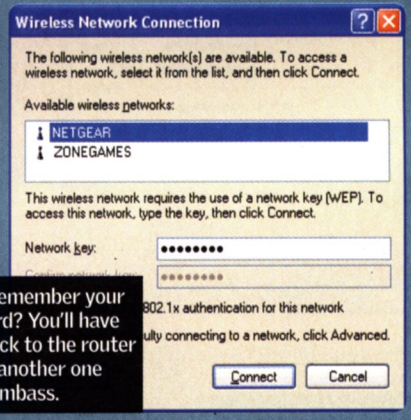
2 Leaving the firewall and NAT settings on their defaults will allow your computers to connect out to the Internet, but won't allow anyone outside to connect in.

3 Never forget to secure your wireless. A WEP key encrypts the wireless signal so others can't snoop in – it's not perfect, but it's a pretty good start. Make sure you choose a WEP key that isn't easy to guess and includes a few random numbers.



05 Windows

Later revisions of Windows XP improve wireless network markedly, and take most of the pain out of connecting. Once you've installed your wireless network card, you should find that after the router's been turned on and configured properly, your new Wi-Fi network will make itself known – you'll probably see a balloon hint in your system tray telling you that you have 'Limited Connectivity'. What this means is that the network is present but encrypted, so you'll need to supply your WEP key.



CAN'T remember your password? You'll have to go back to the router and set another one then, dumbass.

Once you've provided Windows with the right key, your PC should be assigned an IP address and you're all done. You're on the Internet, wirelessly.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

If everything worked first time, congratulations! Award yourself 800 smug points, because quite frankly there was a fair amount to screw up here.

✗ I can't access the web configuration on my router.
✓ Hold down the reset button to force the router back to the address printed in its manual. Check your computer is set to get its IP automatically.

✗ My PC sees the router, but can't access the Internet.
✓ Check the router's WAN configuration and firewall settings, and double check the information your ISP gave you when you subscribed to ADSL.

✗ My wireless connection keeps stopping.
✓ Try downloading the latest drivers for your wireless card from the manufacturer's website.

✗ My router makes singing noises when it's plugged in...
✓ That's the radio, dumbass.



DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...

Problems?

We've all got them you know... Up to your neck in debt? Partner sleeping around? A propensity to wake up on Saturday morning not knowing what the hell happened? We can't help with any of those (but if you know the answers, let us know), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at **wandy@dearwandy.com**, including as much information as necessary and system specs where applicable.

WAR BY PROXY

Q I connect to the Internet through a proxy server at my university. This works fine for Internet surfing, but does not work with Internet gaming. I tried connecting to *World Of Warcraft* so I could play this great game, but with no luck. Is there anything that you could tell me to do so that I can connect and play *WOW*? Right now, after I start the game and supply my username and password, it just waits a while and then tells me I can't connect.

Nicholas Chatzifotis

A *I think you're out of luck. Your university will be using the proxy server as its first line of defence, preventing unauthorised access to the Internet and at the same time hiding the campus network from the outside world. A proxy is basically a go-between – an application which fetches data from remote hosts and passes it on to local users who request it.*

What makes it so secure is that users such as yourself aren't actually connected to the Internet, so the outside world doesn't know you're there. In attempting to break into your university network, all a hacker would see would be the proxy. Additionally, the server will be able to distinguish between different types of traffic, such as email, Web, FTP and so on, and will most likely be configured to be very strict about what it allows through. Generally speaking, the larger the network, the stricter the traffic filter, and in your case there's a high chance you won't be able to see anything but Web pages. Even if you could, the proxy will determine which places you can visit and which you can't. Those 'Net nanny' programs that prevent kids visiting the wrong websites are domesticated proxy servers.

The first thing I'd do is find all other Warcraft *players and petition the network administrator to allow access, perhaps at an allotted time on a particular group of machines. Your admin is likely to have similar requests every hour of every day, so I wouldn't get your hopes up. The only other thing to do is phone your folks and beg them to order you DSL for the holidays. There are still a number of ISPs that will allow you to take out a short-term contract.*

FORTRESSLESS

Q I want to play *Team Fortress Classic* online with my mates. They told me that I need to install Steam to get it to work, but now I've downloaded and installed the Steam platform, *TFC* isn't a listed game. How can I play?

Danny Hopper

A *There are two ways of playing* TFC. *The first is to register an existing* Half-Life *'WON' key from the flipside of the CD case. If you've lost the case but still have* Half-Life *installed on your machine, you can extract the key from the registry.*

To do so, you'll need to open the Registry Editor by clicking Start, then Run and typing regedit into the box. When the Editor is open, browse to Software, Valve, Half-Life *and then Settings within the HKEY_CURRENT_USER hierarchy. The key setting contains the serial number you require – double-click and copy it to the clipboard. Now open up Steam, click to open the Browse Games screen and then click the 'Register A Product' button at the bottom. Paste in the key you copied from the registry and you're done.*

The second way of playing TFC *is by purchasing the Silver or Gold edition of* Half-Life 2. *Both these packages give you full access to Valve's back catalogue, which includes games such as* Ricochet, Opposing Force *and* TFC. *If you elect to buy Bronze, you'll need to have an original* Half-Life *CD key before you can play (see my point above).*

THE HEAT IS OFF

Q After eight whole years with my trusty IBM, I recently upgraded to a Medion PowerPlus 3200+. Imagine my delight at the technology improvements! I immediately changed the GeForce 5200 to a Radeon 9800 Pro and then upped the 512MB PC2700 RAM to 1GB. At the time, I wanted to move to PC3200 but didn't know whether the motherboard would take it.

How can I find out what motherboard I have? I'm buggered if I can find a name. And how can I tell whether it'll take the PC3200? Also, the PC gets fairly hot in summer and so I've slotted an exhaust fan under the Radeon – that helped a lot, but





THIS guy doesn't care for *Counter-Strike*.

DRIVER WATCH

Keep your PC happy

GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 5.6	09-JUN-05
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 77.72	22-JUN-05

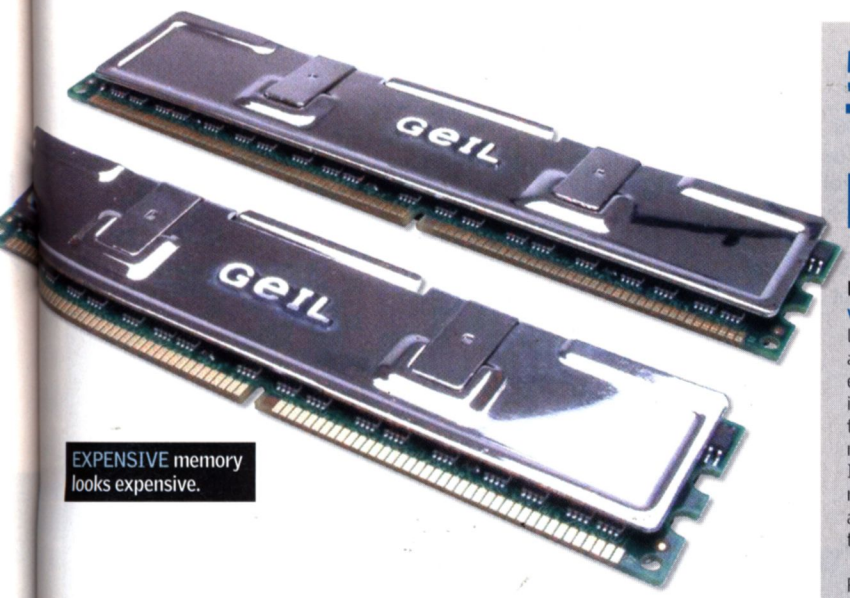
SOUND

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	AUDIGY 4 BETA	28-APR-05
M-Audio	REVO'N 1.0.2.8	13-FEB-04

@ wandy@dearwandy.com
✉ dearwandy, pc zone, future publishing, 99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp

Every time I shut down or restart my PC, the file disappears from the system32 folder. Can you help?

Of course he can! Read below to see how Wandy makes Simon Curtis's day – nay, year.



EXPENSIVE memory looks expensive.

the heat source seems to be the PSU, a rather basic 240W. I want to take your advice and get a Tagan 420W, especially since a GeForce 6800 is the next logical upgrade to me. Will this significantly reduce the heat?

Stephen

A *When buying a machine from a store, the first thing you must do after arriving home is to visit the manufacturer's website and print out its complete specification. There are two reasons for doing this. The first is to make sure that what you just bought matches what was advertised, because you'd be surprised at the number of people who later discover they have the wrong video card and half the memory. The second reason is because it's something you need to know anyway, because if you keep the Medion as long as you kept the IBM, you'll have a tough time locating the same information in eight years' time. So find it, print it and put it somewhere safe.*

Luckily, your model is still current and its details were easy to find at PC World's ServiceCall site – www.pcservicecall.co.uk. I can tell you that you have an Athlon XP 3200+ sitting atop an MS-7015, an MSI motherboard I've never heard of. But it does support a 400MHz bus and thus your PC3200 (DDR400) RAM upgrade gets the green light. The only question is why the ServiceCall website thinks your processor won't support the higher bus speed when I can guarantee it will – the 3200+ was memorable for being the first AMD chip to do so.

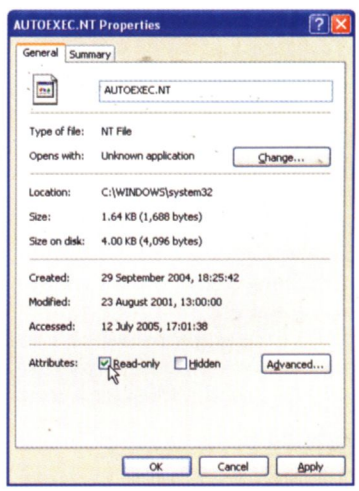
As for the power supply, you'll have to make the shift to a higher output unit, as any top banana video card will demand it. Although a decent twin-fan product like a Tagan may help you combat heat, you should never rely on your PSU to reduce case temperature. When you go shopping for the PC3200 RAM and new power, I'd also go shopping for another cooler.

RETURN OF AUTOEXEC

Q I had the same problem as Philip Dunne in issue 157. My problem was that the error message, "C:\WINDOWS\system32\AUTOEXEC.NT. The system file is not suitable for running MS-DOS and Microsoft Windows applications" popped up every time I wanted to run certain programs. As per your advice, I copied the file over from C:\WINDOWS\repair which sorted it. My problem now is that every time I shutdown or restart my PC, the file disappears from the system32 folder and I have to keep copying it back. Can you help me pin this file down?

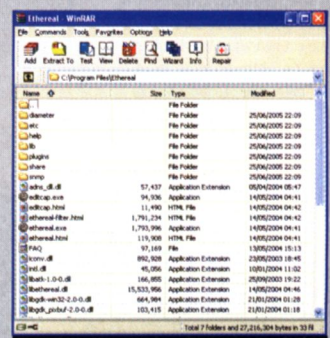
Simon Curtis

A *The file you copied needs to be marked 'read only'. To do this, simply right-click on its icon and select Properties. Put a check in the Read Only box in the Attributes section at the bottom and then click OK. Job done.* PCZ



50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE

1 WinRAR



WINRAR can create ZIP files, but WinZip can't create RAR files. That makes WinRAR the winner.

EXPECT TO PAY £20

www.rarlab.com

Like the more prevalent ZIP, a RAR archive is a compressed container of other files – an enchanted cupboard in which to keep things in a mathematically reduced format and make them take up less space on your hard drive, or make them quicker to download over the Internet. Generally speaking, RARs are noticeably smaller than the equivalent ZIPs, although the process of creating them can take a great deal longer.

The RAR format was developed by Russian-born Eugene Roshal, and WinRAR is the application you need to create, update and extract RAR archives. Although it's always offered several important features that ZIP has not, including 128-bit encryption and the ability to rebuild damaged archives, WinRAR is notable as being the first Windows compression utility with an interface which enabled you to add, view and extract folder structures with the minimum of fuss – it took WinZip years to catch up and offer the same drag-and-drop functionality. A look back at earlier versions of the two programs reveals just how crappy WinZip was, and how advanced WinRAR was in comparison.

Another big plus for WinRAR is the way it can create multipart archives, where the compressed data is split across any number of smaller files, and the way it can create and unpack ZIP files. (In contrast, neither WinZip nor the ZIP handler inside more recent releases of Windows can create RARs.) You can also use WinRAR to create intelligent self-extracting installers and to open CAB, ARJ, LZH, TAR, GZ, ACE, UUE, BZ2, JAR, ISO, 7Z and Z archives. You really don't need any other compression program.

WARNING: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!

Having seen people discussing liquid-cooled PCs on an Internet forum, Conor decided he'd give it a go. Removing the fans from his processor, graphics card and PSU, the hapless Irishman used silicon to waterproof the case and simply filled it up from the tap. Having determined his PC was the cause of the power constantly tripping out, he posted a message to the forum complaining that his machine was "completely shagged", criticising other forum members for being stupid enough to suggest water as a coolant. Is it a joke? Visit www.avforums.com and decide for yourself.

@ mailbox@pczone.co.uk
watchdog, pc zone, future publishing, 99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp



WATCHDOG

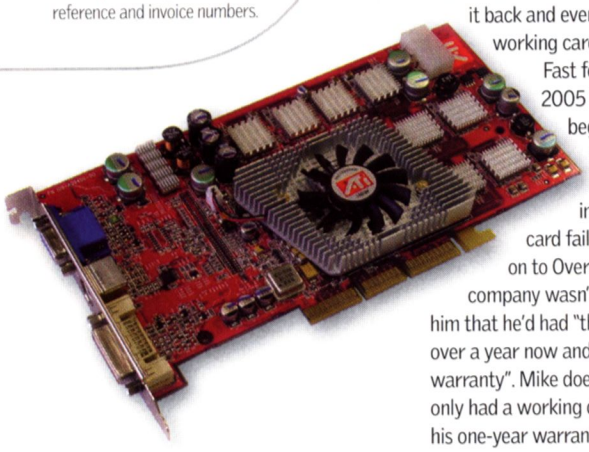
Rotten companies need sorting – and good ones need praising...

Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at **mailbox@pczone.co.uk** with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Pleased remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

CARD GAMES

In February 2004, reader Mike Dommett spent £300 with Overclockers.co.uk, including buying a Sapphire Radeon 9800 Pro. Unfortunately, the card appeared to be faulty on arrival, exhibiting several graphical glitches that would have made Teletext look like Monet in comparison. The card was returned and a replacement sent, but this also turned out to be faulty. Mike duly sent it back and eventually received a working card in June 2004.



Fast forward to February 2005 however and Mike began to get more problems. When his motherboard indicated a graphics card failure, Mike got straight on to Overclockers, but the company wasn't interested, telling him that he'd had "this graphics card for over a year now and therefore it's out of warranty". Mike doesn't agree though – he's only had a working card since last June, so his one-year warranty should cover it.

Our initial probe into Overclockers.co.uk met with little success, but it eventually told us: "It's nothing more complicated than he's out of warranty on the item ordered. The 12-month warranty starts from the time the original item is purchased and not 12 months from the replacement." Fair enough, but that still leaves Mike without a working card, so we got in touch with manufacturer Sapphire who was only too glad to help. Not only did it exchange his card for a new working one under its own two-year guarantee, but the company also waived the normal handling charge. Big up.

Mike contacted Overclockers, but it told him 'you've had this card for a year now, so it's out of warranty'

IN THE DOG HOUSE

The Complaint – Simon Jones purchased an Asus motherboard recently, but instantly noticed that the chipset fan was "a bit noisy". A few weeks later, "a bit noisy" had turned to a "random alternation between a heavy-duty battery drill and a high-pitched dentist's drill" – not exactly the most pleasing accompaniment to playing games.

The Pursuit – We like to think that we're children of the digital generation, so we began by firing off several emails at the appropriate parties. These were promptly returned. We then tried calling Asus's office phone number, only to discover the number wasn't valid. Next we tried telephoning tech support, but gave up after spending an infuriating ten minutes on the phone without speaking to a single living person. The next day we tried again, but promptly dismissed this idea altogether when put back into the never-ending queue. We finally ended up dusting the fax machine off and sending in the complaint that way instead.

The Verdict – Nada. Nowt. Not a word. Not even a cursory email to state it was dealing with the complaint. Shame on you Asus – if Watchdog has trouble getting hold of you, how on earth are your customers faring?

THE ACCUSED

Guilty until proven innocent

DOUBLE TROUBLE

In the world of online gaming, there's only one universe that reader Charles Richards is interested in – *Star Wars Galaxies*. Having spent many a day practising his intergalactic dancing skills, he was getting used to the *Combat Upgrade* and a week of double experience was imminent. However, when Charles went to log on during double experience week, his account was kaput, showing up as 'provisional expired'.



The cause? It seems that the billing company had forgotten to take his payment for that month and his service had been suspended. By the time it was fixed, the double experience week was over and his chance for Wookiee levelling-up action was gone.

Watchdog got in contact with Sony Online Entertainment: "There are several different things that happened to this customer, unfortunately all around the same time. What's unfortunate is that these billing issues happened to coincide with the SWG Combat Upgrade." This meant that although there were three weeks in which players could level their character, Charles unfortunately missed out." However, SOE did offer "players whose re-spec had expired one final opportunity to adjust their character in June". We hope that Charles got a chance to tweak his character at this point, or SOE really will feel the rage of the Wookiees... PCZ

SAINTS NOT SINNERS

OVERCLOCK

Reader Nick 'El Capitan' recently had cause for celebration when he purchased a graphics card from Overclock.co.uk (not to be confused with Overclockers.co.uk). To kickstart his joyous experience, the card initially arrived within a mere 24 hours. Then, when the card developed a fault, the impeccable support service got back to him within the hour and "the card was RMA'd, tested, a fault diagnosed and a new card sent out all within a 48-hour time-frame – fantastic!" But it didn't end there either. When Nick managed to promptly blow up his new PC, he worried "that I was going to be burdened with a new card that I now couldn't use and the bill to go with it". Problem? Nope, Overclock offered a refund... Nick gushes: "Amazing service – I will definitely be using them again!" So let's get this right... Fast delivery, helpful support *and* a fast turn-around? It seems our work here is done...

For those **in the know**

4ms...

Another World Record

Demonstrating its technology leadership in the display market, ViewSonic offers the super-fast LCD monitors. Featuring ultra-fast 4 millisecond (ms) average video response time across the entire colour scale, the 19-inch VX924 and 17-inch VX724 deliver fluid, full-motion images and optimised video performance for a variety of applications.



PC PRO A LIST
VX924
PC Pro
August 2005

CUSTOM PC APPROVED
VX924
Custom PC
August 2005

top gear PC Format
VX924
PC Format
August 2005

PC ADVISOR GOLD
VX924
PC Advisor
September 2005

VX724
17"- designer LCD monitor,
4ms response time (grey to grey)
300cd/m², 500:1 (typ.),
1,280 x 1,024, TCO'99,
analogue + digital inputs

VX924
19"- designer LCD monitor,
4ms response time (grey to grey)
270cd/m², 550:1 (typ.),
1,280 x 1,024, TCO'99,
analogue + digital inputs

www.ViewSonic.co.uk
www.fastresponsetime.com

ViewSonic®
the choice of professionals

GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS 2005

THEY'RE BACK!

VOTING GOES LIVE ON 14TH JULY



HAVE YOUR SAY

ON WHO WALKS AWAY WITH THE

BIGGEST GAMING AWARDS OF THE YEAR

SO MAKE SURE YOU...

GO TO **WWW.GOLDENJOYSTICKS.CO.UK** FROM 14th JULY
TO CAST YOUR VOTE AND BE IN WITH A CHANCE OF WINNING **BIG PRIZES.**

SPONSORED BY...

sonopress
arvato

REMEMBER: YOU ALSO NEED MONEY FOR FOOD AND CLOTHING

We are legally required to remind readers that money splashed on hardware may be better spent on families, wives and girlfriends. *PC ZONE* isn't liable for any estrangement that may ensue.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

The best on the market whether you're Lord of the Manor or a toiling slave to capitalism...

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

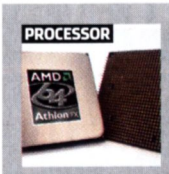
GEFORCE 7800 GTX

EXPECT TO PAY £399
MANUFACTURER XFX
WEBSITE www.xfxforce.co.uk

It's hard to imagine, but NVIDIA's GeForce 7800 GTX is more complex than your CPU. It has more rendering pipelines, more memory bandwidth and more grunt than any other video card on sale. The XFX version stands out as it comes bundled with *Far Cry* on DVD, plus *X2: The Threat* and *MotoGP 2*. If performance is the object it's the only card to buy, but do make sure your PSU is rated at 400W or more.



PROCESSOR



ATHLON 64 FX-57

EXPECT TO PAY £700
MANUFACTURER AMD
WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

For extreme performance, the flagship Athlon is the only processor to buy – even if it makes the same dent in your bank account as last month's mortgage payment. With AMD's new memory controller, unlocked multiplier and highest ever clock speed, the latest FX is the fastest thing inside any PC.

MOTHERBOARD



FATAL1TY AN8 SLI

EXPECT TO PAY £130
MANUFACTURER ABIT
WEBSITE www.abit.com.tw

Designed specifically for gaming, the nForce4 SLI-based Fatal1ty AN8 supports all 939-pin AMD processors. As well as SLI support it features ABIT's Guru Panel, a front-mounted display unit for overclockers. The board also uses a bevy of ABIT features, including OTES cooling and AudioMAX 7.1 onboard audio.

HDD

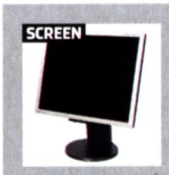


RAPTOR 74GB

EXPECT TO PAY £118
MANUFACTURER Western Digital
WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. And although it's not especially large, it's big enough for a dedicated gaming rig. Two of them in RAID 0 configuration will give you almost 150GB and really make *Battlefield 2* fly.

SCREEN

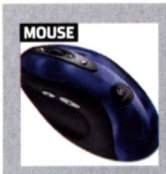


MULTISYNC LCD1970GX

EXPECT TO PAY £360
MANUFACTURER NEC Mitsubishi
WEBSITE www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk

The LCD1970GX is a 19in LCD screen, with an 8ms response time and an inky black glass screen that saturates all the colours and darkens the shadows. It includes a joystick controller for the on-screen display, and a four-port USB hub.

MOUSE



MX510

EXPECT TO PAY £30
MANUFACTURER Logitech
WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

The best implementation of Logitech's MX optical engine, the MX510 features a huge image processing rate making it ideal for gaming. As well as being smoother and more accurate, it's lag free. Although heavier than the MX310, it remains well balanced and makes more sense than the MX1000.

SPEAKERS



Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY £220
MANUFACTURER Logitech
WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

They'll cost you over £200, but they're also the best speakers we've ever tested at *PC ZONE*. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

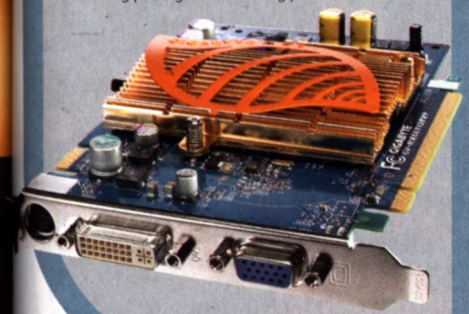
SKINT?

GRAPHICS

GV-NX66T128VP TURBO FORCE

EXPECT TO PAY £133
MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE
WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

A fanless heat-pipe arrangement keeps this GeForce cool and silent. GIGABYTE claims a 38 per cent speed hike over a regular card – not quite, but the boost is noticeable – and it's definitely the fastest 6600GT we've tested. *Thief: Deadly Shadows* and *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising* are bundled, and full VIVO capabilities allow you to capture and edit video from an external source – PowerDirector comes free. A stunning package at a stunning price.



PROCESSOR



ATHLON 64 3000+

EXPECT TO PAY £95
MANUFACTURER AMD
WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

If you don't mind getting your hands dirty in the BIOS, Athlon 64s can be highly rewarding – particularly so on an nForce4 motherboard. Famous for overclocking and top performance in games, there's really no alternative. This AMD chip is the one to have if you're building to a budget.

MOTHERBOARD



A8N-E NFORCE4 ULTRA

EXPECT TO PAY £80
MANUFACTURER ASUSTek
WEBSITE uk.asus.com

The A8N-E supports the full range of Athlon 64 FX, dual-core Athlon 64 X2 and Athlon 64 chips, plus PCI Express and 7.1 channel audio. The nForce4 Ultra chipset has more features than a circus has clowns, and ASUS includes a raft of its own, as well as some serious overclocking tools.

HDD



1200JD SATA

EXPECT TO PAY £55
MANUFACTURER Western Digital
WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SCREEN

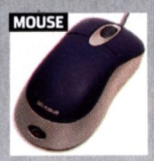


VE710S

EXPECT TO PAY £152
MANUFACTURER ViewSonic
WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710s is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time and 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games.

MOUSE



OPTICAL BLUE

EXPECT TO PAY £14
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.microsoft.co.uk

If you've ever been boggled by the number of buttons on a mouse and have fond memories of a time when three clickers and a wheel were all you needed, Microsoft's blue rodent is for you. It's handsome, light, shaped for any handedness and features a game-capable optical engine.

SPEAKERS



INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY £40
MANUFACTURER Creative
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.

CALL OF DUTY 2

BIG RED ONE™

See the new Call of Duty only in PSW!



FREE POSTER! NEW SEASON FIXTURES

PSW

OFFICIAL! THE UK'S BEST-SELLING INDEPENDENT PLAYSTATION MAG

ON SALE NOW!





PCZONE

FREEPLAY

Where fun doesn't cost a thing!

DISC EDITOR Suzy Wallace

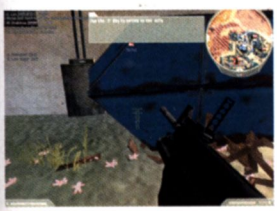
Welcome

WE MAY NOT cause outrage in America with our pierced jubblies, but just like Janet Jackson, we're here to proclaim that the best things in life are free. No, that doesn't mean harassing you to donate your time to your local charity, or even to swap your worldly possessions for a treehouse – we just want you to peruse an entire new section of *PC ZONE*. Best of all, none of it costs a penny. Yep, you heard that right. Nada, naught, nil, nothing, zilch, zero, zip.

Think of the Freeplay section as a guide to the best free stuff around: the biggest games demos, the most addictive freeware games, the latest and hottest mods, the coolest gaming movies (and where to see them), the lowdown on how to make your own games, as well as tips on getting the most from the titles that you've already spent your hard-earned cash on. To make it even easier, you'll find most of the content on the discs too. So, the next time someone tells you that you don't get anything for free in this life, direct them our way and we'll show them otherwise...

Try this!

Find some pink fluffy teddy bears in *Battlefield 2*



Battlefield 2 may be full of big tough soldiers with death-dealing guns, but someone on the development team definitely has a soft spot. If you blow up the right box in the northern part of the Sharqi Peninsula map, a host of pink teddies spill out. Bless.

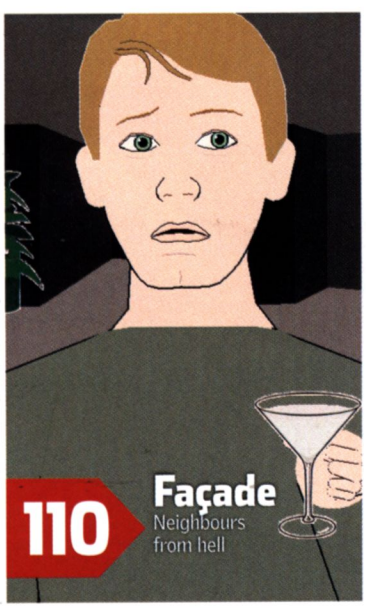
WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH



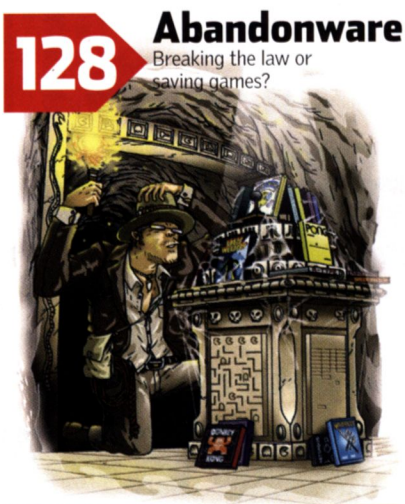
109 Fahrenheit
French murder-mystery. C'est formidable!



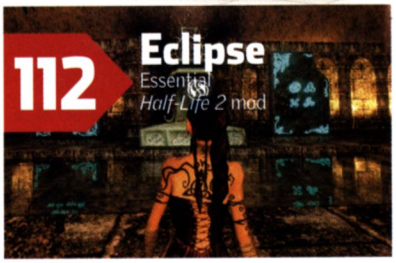
108 Dungeon Siege II
Huge demo of Microsoft's role-player



110 Façade
Neighbours from hell



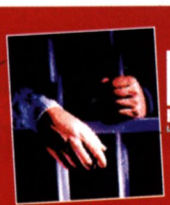
128 Abandonware
Breaking the law or saving games?



112 Eclipse
Essential *Half-Life 2* mod



113 COR Project
Big stompy robots



PCZONE FREE-O-METER

0 HOURS — 179 HOURS*

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month

SNIPPETS



PIMP MY WORM

Xzibit's nowhere to be seen and the four-wheeled rust buckets have been replaced by slimy invertebrates. However, you can pimp your worm, at the address below, to your heart's content from an assortment of themed heads, hands, eyes and faces.
www.codemasters.co.uk/worms/pimpmyworm



MAKE LOVE NOT GUILD WARS

After seeing the "how can we leave our lovingly crafted *WOW* identities in the lurch?" comment in a previous *PC ZONE*, Jack Chapman reckons he has the answer – play *Guild Wars*. "If you stay with *WOW* you'll never be able to appreciate the pure beauty of a necromancer orgy," he admits, sending us this frightening screenshot. Ah, there's nothing like undead love between friends.

BEYOND A JOKE

www.leeroyjenkins.net

Crazy Frog reported as 'slightly intimidated'




LEEROY does it again.

DESPITE BEING ABOUT as mildly amusing as the videos you get shown at work that involve cats jumping into walls, the Leeroy phenomenon continues.

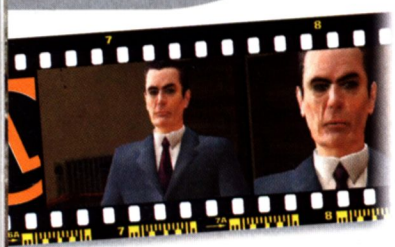
Several months ago we saw a staged *World Of Warcraft* video. It was based around Leeroy disrupting his clan's nerdy tactics session with a cry of "LEEROY JENKINS!", and featured a mad dash into a cavern full of massive nasties and a statement that showed his penchant for the eating of chicken.

As you can imagine it stopped being mildly amusing ten seconds after you saw it... but... but... there are T-shirts (www.cafepress.com/leeroyschicken), dance remixes (www.soundclick.com/bands/7/coldbloodedkiller_music.htm) and even pigging ringtones (www.leeroyjenkins.net/leeroyringtone.mp3).

The Internet was built for shooting virtual people and the distribution of pornography, not this nonsense. We're writing to our MP.







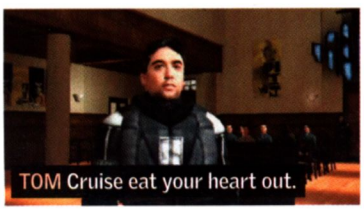
G-MAN FOR OSCAR?

www.machinima.com

Half-Life 2's G-Man given starring roles

THE G-MAN, *Half-Life's* mysterious dimension-hopping Timelord type bloke, is launching himself as a movie star and rock singer. The former intergalactic destiny-manipulator is now to be found reprising Jack Nicholson's role as a hard-ass marine sergeant in ***A Few Good Men***, as well as belting out nu-metal in a video for ***Breaking Benjamin*** track ***So Cold***, in two new machinima video clips.

Machinima (that's muh-sheen-eh-mah) is the creation of movies using video game engines, an art that's getting scarily better by the day. In *A Few Good G-Men* (www.nailbiter.net/gman) we are treated to a shot-by-shot remake of the "YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH!" bit.


TOM Cruise eat your heart out.

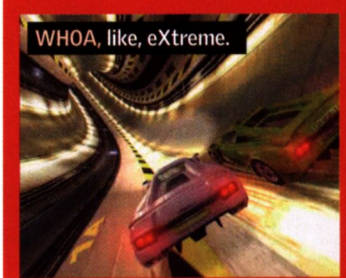
I'm Still Seeing Breen (www.machinima.org/paul_blog) finds G bellowing out the lines to *Breaking Benjamin's* post-grunge *So Cold* as part of a video clip that's been aired on MTV!

Pipe Down

Free *TrackMania Sunrise* eXtreme add-on revealed

www.trackmaniagame.com




WHOA, like, eXtreme.

IF YOU'RE CURRENTLY obsessed with French puzzle racer *TrackMania Sunrise*, you'll be "sur la lune"* with the news that a free add-on patch is due for release this winter.

Developer Nadeo is promising a new single-player campaign, a boxful of new track parts for the game's comprehensive editor and other general gameplay improvements.

From the teaser movie (available to download from the website) it's pretty clear that the "eXtreme" tag comes from the fact that you'll be able to drive your vehicles at ridiculous speeds through gravity-defying *F-Zero*-style pipes and multi-levelled tunnels for that "just got off the Channel Ferry" feeling. We'll give you the definitive verdict on *TrackMania Sunrise eXtreme* – as well as the full free patch on our cover discs – in a few month's time. Zut alors!

* "Over the moon." Jeez.



STAND-UP COMIC

www.phwcomics.com

CD & DVD

The *Half-Life 2 Apostasy* comic creator talks exclusively to *PC Zone*

COMICS MAY BE the only place where men get away with wearing skin-tight spandex, but there's none of that nonsense in BrashFink's *Apostasy* comic series. Created using *Garry's Mod* for *Half-Life 2*, it utilises the Source engine to bring the sinister and shadowy world of Gordon Freeman to life. We caught up with BrashFink, aka James Brandt, to ask him about his *City 17* strip...

PC ZONE What was it that inspired you to create *Apostasy*?

BrashFink Well, when I finished *Half-Life 2*, I was blown away. I love film screenwriting, so it really got my creative juices going and I thought about doing something. Then one day I was watching G4TV [US videogame TV channel] and saw this thing called *Garry's Mod*. It was like a bell went off in my head!

PCZ How big a *Half-Life* fan are you?

BF I would say huge, though I must be honest – I never played the first game. But when *Half-Life 2* finally came out... I don't even know how to put it. I was awestruck by the storyline. I'm enough of a fan that I'm seriously considering building a Civil Protection suit for Halloween – that's pretty sad, isn't it?

PCZ How long does it take on average to create an episode?



BF It depends on what's in the page, but an average one takes between four and five hours from start to finish.

PCZ How many episodes of *Apostasy* are you planning?

BF It's looking like it will be between eight and ten. There is a definite end to the story though.

PCZ Do you have the story figured out already?

BF Yep, the basic outline is all taken care of. The story is evolving too – after seeing some reports on the story of *Half-Life 2: Aftermath*, some alterations were needed.

PCZ What are your plans for the future?

BF Another comic maker and I are planning an original sci-fi story and I'm also working on a story for a single-player mod that will tie directly into *Apostasy*.

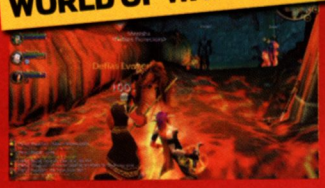






Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH: WORLD OF WARCRAFT



Patch v1.6.0 ensures that "You no longer spout profanity when talking about sitting while drunk."

SNIPPETS



SPEED DEMON

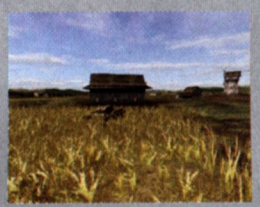
Diablo may have taken the average gamer many hours (and health potions) to complete, but David Gibbons has managed it in a mere 53 minutes. It sounds unbelievable but he has the video to prove it. To watch this and more speed runs, head to **speeddemosarchive.com.**



CD & DVD

TAKE THEM FROM THE REAR

Getting annoyed with your team-mates running off like 'Leeroys' in *Battlefield 2*? Then look no further because Foolish Entertainment's *Advanced Tactical Centre* Mod lets you all connect to the ATC host before the game, so that you can draw out your tactics on the handy maps provided. **www.foolishentertainment.com/index.asp?p=2&s=6**



CD & DVD

LOUD & OFFENSIVE

If you're partial to the WWII thrills of the *Red Orchestra* Mod, you'll love its 'Summer Offensive' map pack. With each of the seven maps designed to show off vehicle combat, this is one pack no self-respecting *RO* lover should be without. **www.redorchestra.clanservers.com**

Movie of the Month

GHOST RECON 3

Ghost Recon 2 may have skipped the PC entirely, but its younger and better looking sibling could re-establish the once-popular series with its combination of gritty urban setting, realistic tactics and stunning graphics. Hit www.ghostrecon.com.



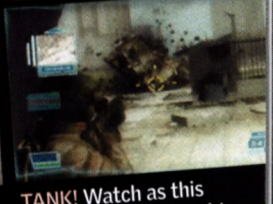
NEXT-GEN graphics, CNN-style shaky camera footage, particle effects and amazing animation.



YO ESE! The whole of the game takes place in an entirely believable Mexico City.



THE HUD gives you tons of useful information and is even based on real-life technology.



TANK! Watch as this armoured heavyweight gets stung from above.

DISTINCTLY ODD SIMS

www.verystrangesims.com

The Sims 2: lewd, uncut and in trouble. But only with idiots



CELEBRITY ANTI-GAMING LAWYER Jack Thompson has been busy banging on about how EA is "co-operating, gleefully, with the mod community to turn *The Sims 2* into a porn offering."

Apparently evil gamers have worked out a way to remove the blurring on sims' bits, revealing "full frontal nudity, including nipples, penises, labia and pubic hair." Although EA has gone on record to say that under the mosaics its little people are more Ken and Barbie than they are Ron Jeremy.

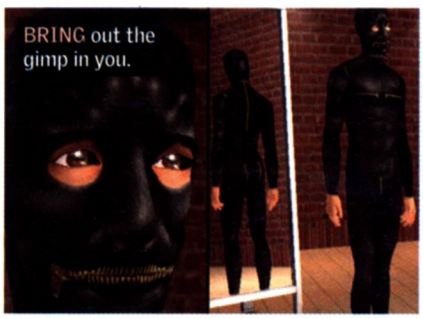
Which isn't to say there aren't a few oddities floating around that have missed the idiotic legal eagle's radar. Gimp outfits will be the least of his worries, as a quick browse of this site reveals such atrocities as the "Unfortunate Genetic Mishap" skin with protruding willy. From charred bodies to old men with nappies, all tastes are catered for. If you're of sound mind and voting age then visit www.verystrangesims.com and check it out for yourself. Or don't. In fact we'd rather you didn't.



KIDS game, eh?



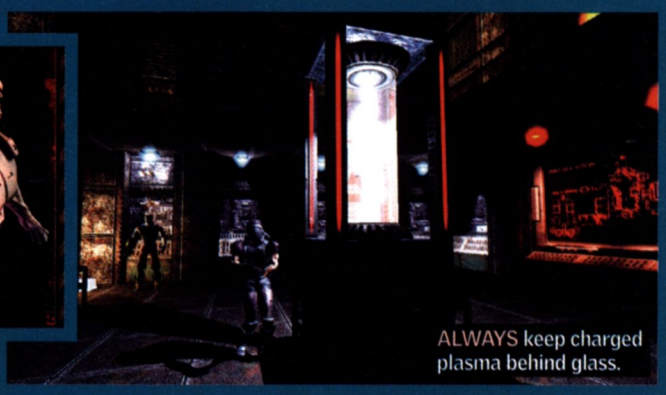
BRIAN kept tight-lipped about the Farley's Rusk shortage.



BRING out the gimp in you.







ALWAYS keep charged plasma behind glass.

Quake awakening

www.planetquake.com/meanarena/quake2_lostmarine

Doom 3 engine gets injected with some of the old Strogg spirit



RED sky at night. And day for that matter.

As you may have noticed on this month's shimmery shiny cover, the *Quake* universe is readying a new assault on the PC. But *Quake 4* isn't the only way back to Stroggos, since a group of budding modders are inches away from completing a total conversion aimed squarely at taking the vibe of *Quake II* and slamming it slap-bang in the middle of the *Doom 3* engine.

The idea of a *Quake II* remix in modern, 3D-accelerated technology isn't a new idea – John Carmack himself suggested it back in 2003. Now, however, through the obsessive processes of fanhood, the concept has taken shape in *Quake II: Lost Marine*.

It's not a direct rehash either – although certain gameplay will reappear direct from the original, nearly all of the content will be fresh and original. Hell, it even removes some of the linearity that id games thrive upon and gives you decisions to make and pathways to choose...

It's strange, but simply looking at the rusty and mysteriously slotted textures on the walls make us feel nostalgic for times past, even if it has been designed from the ground up by plucky modders and slotted into the *Doom 3* engine.

After a *Quake* drought of more than half a decade, soon we won't be able to move for reanimated biomechanical flesh.

THE TWO PRIVATEERS



www.priv.solsector.net
wcuniverse.sourceforge.net

Two *Wing Commander* recreations nestle in the same space

ONCE UPON A TIME there were two remakes of the same freeform space adventure, one full of fan-made imaginings and Kilrathis not behaving as they should and another purist version that recreated the original *Wing Commander* Universe without a star system a metre out of place.

We'll put them both head-to-head next month after some extensive play-testing, but it would be a crime not to mention that the purist version has finally crossed the finishing line. *Privateer Gemini Gold* is now available at www.priv.solsector.net.

Despite close development ties between both projects, *Gemini Gold* claims it has a far more authentic *Wing Commander* vibe as well as somewhat improved game mechanics over the pre-existing remake that resides at wcuniverse.sourceforge.net.

Both will be on the cover discs and under scrutiny next issue, but we recommend an immediate perusal.



STARSHIP Phallus 1 blasting off!

Just Not Cricket

The naughty extra that never was...

www.codemasters.co.uk/brianlara



IT'S FREEPLAY'S ROLE to point out Easter eggs and hidden nuggets of gameplay, although this might be stretching it seeing as it's all a big fat marketing lie.

A suspiciously timed revelation in the form of Lauren Pope's breasts almost appearing in Codemasters' latest offering has confirmed the notion that mammary glands and PR go together like cricket and streaking. Y'see, *Brian Lara International Cricket 2005* has been hiding a naughty scene in which Lauren gets her digitally rendered baps out. It's really more of a Tepid Tea than a Hot Coffee, especially seeing as Codemasters has removed the 'feature' from the final game.

Some real Easter eggs, that actually exist will be at your disposal come next month...

GW XP

Guild Wars expansions ahoy

WE RECENTLY WENT dungeon bashing with *Guild Wars* boss Jeff Strain and managed to get details about both the *Chapter Two* expansion and the summer update, now dubbed *Sorrow's Furnace*.

"The expansion is slated for the first half of 2006," he says. "What you can expect is new professions, new skills, new worlds and an entire new continent. Our job is to make sure it's so damn cool that you wouldn't even consider not buying it."

The free summer update, meanwhile, explores the dwarven land of Grenth's Footprint – a mountainous region stripped bare for mining. Release of the update is imminent and should provide new challenges for all levels of players.



SO, YOU WANT TO BE A... Games Designer



NAME Stephen Hood
WORKING ON The Movies
AGE 27
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE Sony Studios, Climax Studios, Deibus Studios

PCZ How did you get started?
SH An agency I joined sent my CV out to several developers. I made it very clear just how eager I was to get into the industry, without sounding desperate. I also made sure my CV was laid out properly and well written, but I still got knocked back by loads of companies until I finally got a job with Sony.
PCZ What's your role at Lionhead?
SH When I joined I shadowed Peter Molyneux before joining *The Movies*. For five weeks we were locked in the boardroom redesigning the game, then each designer was given a different piece of the game to oversee.
PCZ What advice would you give to someone who wants to become a game designer?
SH Sign up with an agency and keep an eye on job sites. Be prepared to move away from home and make sure your CV is well presented and accompanied by a covering letter. Also, think about the worst game you've played, why it was so bad and how you could have improved it. Finally, research the company you want to work for and its games, so that you can impress it with your design ideas.

WE SAY... DIY

Want to be a level designer? The best way to get noticed is to do something off your own back, so get involved in the mod scene. Produce something suitably spectacular and you'll soon find yourself head-hunted by the top development houses.

NEXT MONTH
How to be... a booth babe!

Demos

Try 'em before you buy 'em!



EXCLUSIVE!





DISC TROUBLES?

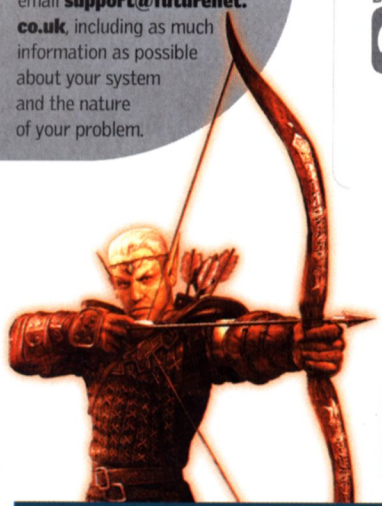
Having problems getting something off our discs to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover disc support. Alternatively, email **support@futurenet.co.uk**, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.

DVD ONLY

DUNGEON SIEGE II

Don your beards for Microsoft's heavyweight RPG

www.gaspowered.com/ds2 ETA: September





WHOEVER DEVELOPED THE *Dungeon Siege II* demo must have had the adage 'the bigger the better' ringing in their ears as it weighs in at a hefty 1.5GB – the biggest demo for any offline game we've ever had (and a great reason to switch to the DVD version if you haven't already)!

After the quite superb movie, you start off as a mercenary under the service of Valdis and his assorted nasty chums who are storming the island of Greilyn, the home of the dryads. Fight your way through this siege and you'll find yourself taken prisoner in the dryad city. From here, you have to earn the trust of your captors before they'll let you wander about freely and even then you'll have to curry favours to get that prisoner ring off your neck. Once that's done, the city and the jungle are your oysters, so you should feel free to explore.



TRUST NO-ONE

These dryads don't trust you at all and the pet shop is off limits to prisoners. Gain their trust by locating and burning down the four towers and then return to Prison Warden Celia to get that nasty prisoner ring taken off.



PETTING CORNER

Once the ring has been removed, head over to the pet shop. Once there you can browse the variety of pets that are on offer (OK, two plus a mule), making sure that you choose or that will compliment your party.



HEAVY PETTING Once you get rid of that pesky prisoner ring it's time to get your very own pet



NEW TRICKS

Get it to the next level and you'll be rewarded with a new ability and the pet will grow in appearance. Manage to get it to full adult stage and it will be able to cast a unique spell that isn't available elsewhere.



FEED ME NOW

Now that you've got yourself a pet, it's time to start feeding it items to level it up. And caring for your little critter doesn't come cheap either – the more expensive the item you feed it, the more it will grow, so dig deep!

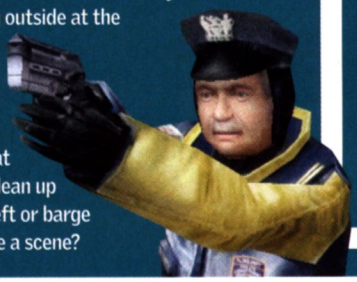
CD & DVD

FAHRENHEIT

www.fahrenheitgame.com
ETA: September 9

The temperature's rising in Atari's adventure-thriller

The day of the adventure game may well have been and gone, but *Fahrenheit* has bravely taken the genre and given it a new twist. The demo sees you start off as Lucas Kane after he's just suffered a bit of a mental episode and murdered an innocent old man. As you do. So there you are in the seedy toilets of the local diner with a dead man at your feet and a policeman sitting outside at the eating area. Utilising a deft combination of mouse gestures, it's up to you what to do – will you clean up the mess that's left or barge outside and cause a scene?



Wrist Action Check out these RSI-inducing moves



Dead Weight
The chap on the floor may be as dead as a dodo, but you still don't want Mr Policeman walking in and finding him. Alternate between the left and right keys (a la Track & Field) to pull him out of the way.



Dirty Scrubber
Grab the mop and get a taste of the daily life of a cleaning lady by sweeping it up and down across the blood-stained floor. All that work and it doesn't even get rid of all the blood. Where's the Mr Muscle when you need it?

CD & DVD

HEROES OF THE PACIFIC

Flying high in Codemasters' frantic aerial battler

www.heroesofthepacific.com
ETA: September 9

FLYING GAMES GENERALLY fall under one of two camps; they're either so complicated that simply looking at the keyboard overlay makes your head hurt, or some of the realism has been sacrificed for a bundle of fun. *HOTP* falls into the second category, so this demo should prove enjoyable for plane spotters and novices alike. The demo on the discs features three missions from the full game, including Pearl Harbor and Wake Island and offers a selection of planes to fly.

I WISH I COULD FLY, RIGHT UP TO THE SKY. Oh, I have.



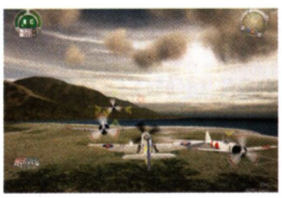
CHALLENGE SUZY!

ACES HIGH!
How many enemy planes can you take out on the Marianas level? We managed 78.

1. There are four classic WWII aircraft on offer, ranging from the massive Lightning to the small single-engined Corsair. All of them explode nicely.
2. Explosions – if you're seeing plenty of these then that means you're doing something right, or very very wrong.
3. Enemy fighters attack in swarms; sweep in behind them and spray them with lead to put an end to their dastardly ways.
4. It's not all combat – some objectives will require you to protect targets such as these oil tanks from the Japanese bombers.

Flying Foes

The sky is filled with two types of enemy.



Fighters
Fast and manoeuvrable, these will be your biggest obstacle to staying alive. Take them out before they get you.



Bombers
A real threat to ground forces, but their slowness and tendency to fly in straight lines make them easy pickings.

THE BEST OF THE REST



MOTOGP: ULTIMATE RACING TECHNOLOGY 3

If you've a penchant for leather that doesn't fall under the category of bondage or The Village People, then you'll probably love this latest version of *MotoGP*. The demo features the Le Mans track and a night-time Tokyo track for the NFS: Underground-influenced Extreme mode.
www.thq.co.uk/games/



CODENAME: PANZERS PHASE TWO (MULTIPLAYER)

You had a chance to try out the single-player game last issue, so if you're hooked on *Panzers*' tactical WWII warfare, now you can sample the delights of the multiplayer demo as well. The demo features a Domination map called Road to Perdition and an MP Mission level titled Factions.
www.panzers.de



BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005

Cricket. Yet another game in the illustrious history of Great Britain that we created but can't win. Mind you, if you're a bit of a dab hand at the controls, you might be able to turn it around (or wait for bad weather) as you play a match at The Oval.
www.codemasters.co.uk/brianlara

CHROME SPECFORCE

Take on the role of an elite intergalactic anti-terrorist squad in this demo of *Specforce*, the sequel to futuristic sci-fi shooter *Chrome*. In this mission, you must infiltrate a drugs lab, and with the opportunity to stomp around in an AT-ST style mech, explosive action is guaranteed.
www.specforcethegame.com

PCZONE HOT DOWNLOADS

DOOM MOVIE TRAILER www.doommovie.com



Check out this teaser trailer for the *Doom* movie, due out in October. Whether or not the pant-stain-inducing atmosphere of the game will make the transition to the big screen remains to be seen, but one thing's for sure – those Martian corridors look satisfyingly ominous.

ANTLION TROOPERS DEUCE antlions.hl2world.com

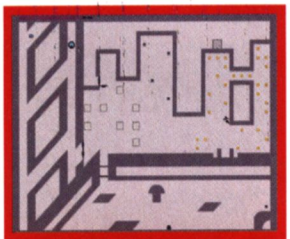


Obviously-titled sequel to the popular *Antlion Troopers* mod for *Half-Life 2*, this single-player map sees you and your combine comrades fighting for your lives in Death Valley as wave after wave of mindless Antlion hordes attempt to relieve you of your various body parts.

Freeware

We wouldn't call *Will Porter* cheap, but 'miserly' and 'unwashed' are fair points

Freeplay is dedicated to bringing you the best free games content the Net has to offer, be it freeware, homebrews, remakes, webgames or emulation – you'll never have to buy another game again. Strutting their stuff this month are US couple Trip and Grace, along with some ninjas and teeny-tiny boats...



N

The Latest Ninja

Developer: Metanet
www.harveycartel.org/metanet

N features an extremely tiny Ninja– but one that concentrates on leaping and acrobatic twizzling rather than violence. With a mere one-and-a-half-minute lifespan (lengthened through the pursuit of gold), it's up to you to control the little fella platform-style and open the door to the next level without having your poor stick body broken or crushed. With hundreds of user and developer-created levels available, 90 per cent of which being as hard as granite nails, it's another lo-fi gem that can be enjoyed by one and all – no matter how ninja-bastard your own machine may be.







FAÇADE

Developer: Procedural Arts
www.interactivestory.net

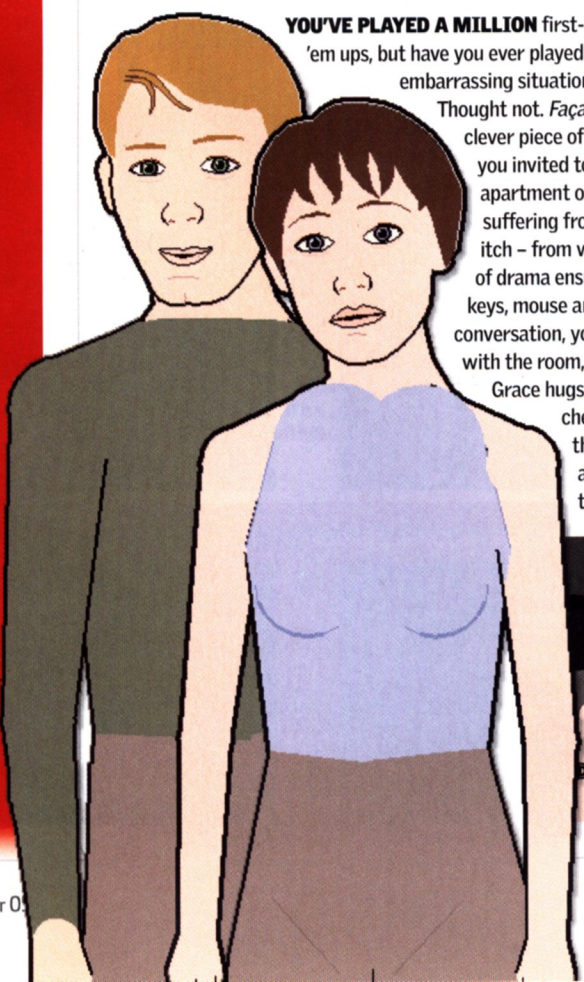
Guess who's coming to dinner?

FREEWARE GAME OF THE MONTH

YOU'VE PLAYED A MILLION first-person shoot 'em ups, but have you ever played a first person embarrassing situation 'em up? Thought not. *Façade* is an extremely clever piece of software that has you invited to the New York apartment of a couple suffering from the ten-year itch – from which all kinds of drama ensues. Using cursor keys, mouse and typed conversation, you can interact with the room, give Trip and Grace hugs and banter cheerfully about their trip to Italy – although every time, the distance that's grown between the couple looms large over the conversation.

It may sound like watching an asexual episode of *Sex And The City*, but what makes it such an engaging experience is the way that Trip and Grace instantaneously react to what you type – it's the closest you'll have ever come to having an intelligent conversation with a gaming character. The telling looks on both their faces as you tell them to shut up, attempt to smooth out their differences, dig deep for the secrets they hide or simply line up Trip for a good old man-on-man snog are wonderfully animated – while each time you play, different conversation arcs vary, with the warring couple attempting to win you over and using your opinions as weapons against each other.

It's vastly intelligent stuff, even though the first play through of every living being undoubtedly revolves around throwing abuse at the hapless pair, trying out all manner of incomprehensible anglicisms in the American text-recognition software and trying to get into Grace's knickers through futile cleavage chat. If you're a poncy theatre-type nerd, I'd compare it to *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?* and recommend it wholeheartedly. If you're not, I'd still recommend you give it a play and read some books too.



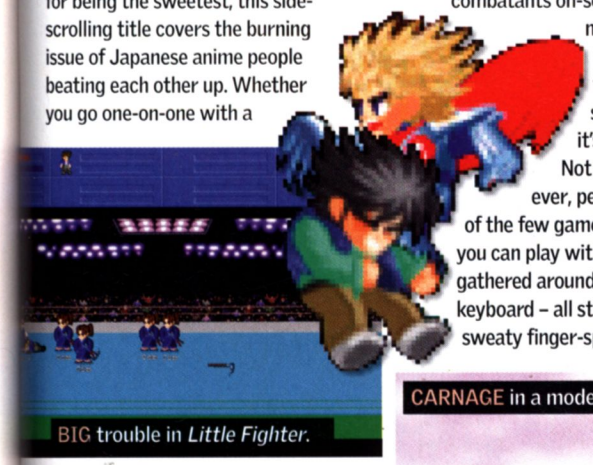


LITTLE FIGHTER 2

Playground scraps, anime style...

Developer: Starski Wong and Marti Wong | home.netfront.net/~marti/lf2/lf2.html

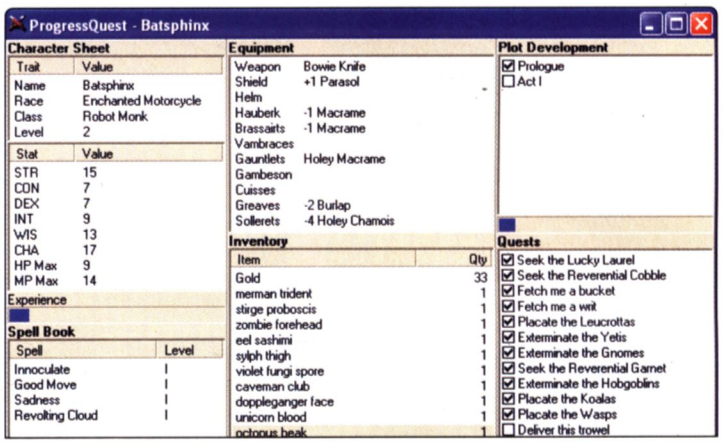
Not exactly the most demanding of beat 'em ups, but among the candidates for being the sweetest, this side-scrolling title covers the burning issue of Japanese anime people beating each other up. Whether you go one-on-one with a *Streetfighter*-esque opponent, or turn up the heat by having eight or so combatants on-screen beating merry hell out of wrong-doers in the time-honoured side-scrolling way, it's a neat lo-fi treat. Not the greatest game ever, perhaps, but it's one of the few games available that you can play with several people gathered around the same keyboard – all stretching for sweaty finger-space.



BIG trouble in *Little Fighter*.



CARNAGE in a model village.



PROGRESS QUEST

Saves you from subscription fees...

Developer: A fella called Grumdrig | www.progressquest.com

Like gaining experience? Enjoy killing monster after monster to an endless degree? Realised that lying beyond the lure of *Everquest* and *WOW* there's actually very little apart from a relentless list of routine slaughter, odd jobs and parcels to deliver? Then we have the piss-take game for you.

Progress Quest is a game that fills all the functions of your average online goblin-hack, yet has the brilliant function of you not having to give any level of interaction beyond choosing a name, a class and a race. Simply leaving the taskbar running for ten minutes had our character, Batsphinx (a robot monk of the sacred race of enchanted motorcycles) killing undernourished peasants and underage imps, as well as levelling up, like nobody's business. All on his tod. And so, with no real-life money or, indeed, life wasted we could go about our daily business, drink beer, have a girlfriend etc etc. It's a win-win situation all round.

GUNROAR

Developer: ABA Games
www.asahi-net.or.jp/~cs8k-cyu/windows/gr_e.html

Just messing around in boats...

Kenta Cho, resident of Tokyo and IT researcher leads an extraordinary double-life. Sort of. Well, not really. But he has a day job, and devotes his free-time to creating critically-acclaimed shmups and releasing them as freeware to the delight of a worldwide audience. Which, you have to admit, is pretty cool. Newest from the Cho conveyor belt is *Gunroar*, a game as unapologetic in its fit-inducing visuals as it is liable to leave you in a babbling hypnotised state well beyond your bedtime. Essentially, it's a shooter that gives you a gunboat with 360-degree movement, yet locks the direction your little boat is looking in whenever you start blasting.

Accompanied by suitably entrancing techno music, neon polygons have rarely been so alluring. Your eyes will hurt, but it'll be worth it.



GUNROAR is heavy on the polygons.



JUST don't hit anything neon and you'll be fine.

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

The Room



flash.qbol.net/pl;p/youxi/images/04042203.swf

A game that briefly overtook both solitaire and wistfully staring at female work colleagues among the more office-bound peers of *ZONE* staffers, this apparently basic point-and-clicker is perfect for wasting time while your boss is in a meeting, gone to the toilet or whatever. It starts off easy (finding keys under pillows, attaching extension cords to hi-fis), but very soon gets so tricky that your teeth go cold and you occasionally forget to breathe. Looks deceive here (we're aware it appears to be total bobbins), but the logical thinking it demands creates a weird feeling of compulsion... And come on, it's better than staring at an Excel spreadsheet surely?









PLAY: MOD

ECLIPSE

DVD ONLY

students.guildhall.smu.edu/eclipse

Suzy Wallace finds a new meaning to 'going mental'



A CRAPPY TABLE WITH a wonky leg and a meal that I managed to burn beyond all recognition (beans on toast was very complex back then) – these were my key achievements at school. But over at The Guildhall in the big ol' US of A, 17 students from the Art Creation, Level Design and Software Development courses have pulled off something altogether more impressive.



Eclipse is the students' single-player Total Conversion for *Half-Life 2*, but such is the quality of the work, you'd never twig that this was completed by relative newcomers to the scene in a mere five months. From the first glimpse to the very last credit, the entire mod oozes quality.

First of all, it's graphically stunning – the first level of your hometown Auldhaven begins with your character in the middle of some beautifully detailed countryside. Leaves fall from intricately detailed trees around your head, butterflies swoop by on a summer breeze and flowers cover the grass in a bright sea of colour.

MENTAL AGILITY

The story is a rather minimal affair, outlining just enough to advance you from zone to zone, but the basic premise sees you playing as a young sorceress who's just acquired the powers of telekinesis. This leads to what is probably the mod's greatest success: your telekinetic trickery enables you to pick up and throw objects in your surroundings, making superb use of the Source engine and demonstrating a level of interaction with your environment rarely found outside of a Greenpeace protest.

Used as an offensive tool, your ability has a definite feel of playing *Half-Life 2* with the Gravity Gun as your only weapon. Later on, you acquire the Hellstorm ability which enables you to summon three fiery orbs, but although these are undoubtedly more powerful, there's something innately satisfying about clobbering enemies over the head with random objects lying about the screen. Toilet throwers in *Half-Life 2* Deathmatch should know exactly what I'm talking about.

The only minor drawback is the length of the outing – you can whizz through the whole thing in a couple of hours or less, but what's there is an impressive achievement for a bunch of bloody students. No doubt they're already celebrating their triumph at the nearest subsidised bar... PCZ

PLAY: MOD

COR PROJECT

UT2004 mod transforms men into machines!

www.corproject.com

THE COUNTER ORGANIC Revolution (COR) has begun. This may sound a little disconcerting, but believe us, it's very good news indeed. A multiplayer mod for *UT2004*, *COR* brings shape-changing, Transformer-style robots – a la that awesome dancing bot in the Citroën advert – to your PC, free.

Although still in beta stage, it's looking stupendous. The mod's plot revolves around a faction of robots previously used as workers by humans in the hostile environment of Tantalus IX. The robots have rebelled and declared the COR, forcing the The Great Human Council to deploy its own shape-changing bots. Which is where the fun starts.

At the touch of a key your bot changes from walk to vehicle mode. All weapons are energy-based, so ammunition is out the window, although every shot adds to your bot's temperature: overheat and you're scrap. Game modes include Assault, Team Deathmatch and the interesting Linear Multiplayer Progression – it's not available to test as we write this, but it's billed as a 'revolutionary' multiplayer story mode.

The team element of the mod extends to players having to utilise their combined morph potential. One player might morph into a weak, though stealthy, infiltration droid, slip into the enemy base, nick the flag, then get picked up by a friendly aircraft to be shuttled to safety. How cool is that?


THE little buggy can't half shift.


CUSTOMISE bot load-out before the shooting begins.

FIRING weapons increases core temperature – overheat and you die!

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY – STEEL SQUAT

downloads.ubi.com/download.php?id=132

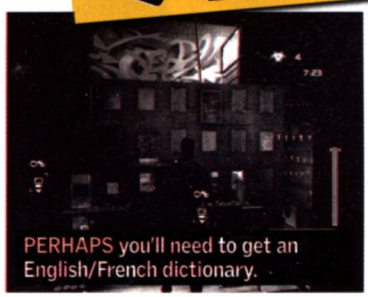
Chaos Theory fans can finally breathe a sigh of relief. *Steel Squat* is here

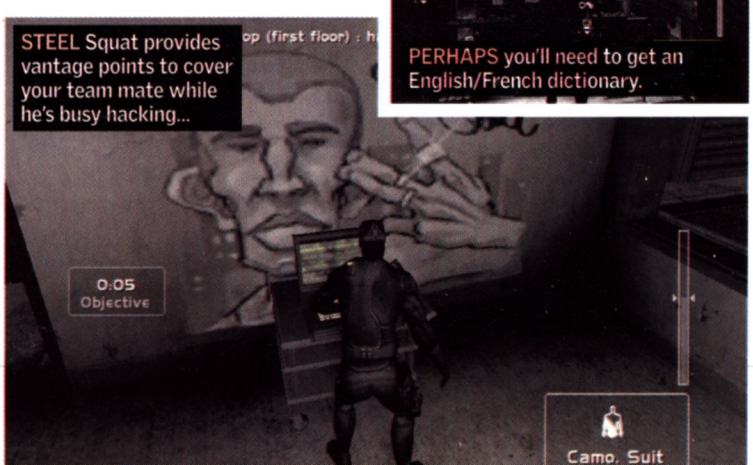
PLAY: MAP

SET IN THE heart of Brooklyn, New York, and home to a vicious war between the Steel and Caesar gangs, Ubisoft's new Versus map aims to please everyone. Combining scope for both internal and external skirmishing, thanks to its unusual design of two HQs directly facing each other across crowded urban terrain, it also features a hackable crane that opens up a secret room. However, early reports indicate that it favours Spies and their superior hiding abilities.

At the present time, you may struggle to find a decent game on this map, thanks to its relative newness and the fact that the instructions were originally only available in French. Nothing too challenging, if you can work out that 'Accomplissez' means 'Accomplish', but early games had more than a few Spies and Mercs asking each other "Ou est le plage?"

All that should have changed by the time you read this, when a triple co-op map pack should be available, featuring Polar Base, a North Korean nuclear plant and UN HQ. More info on these in next month's Freeplay.


PERHAPS you'll need to get an English/French dictionary.



PCZONE TOP 5 UT2004 MODS



1. **RED ORCHESTRA** Winner of the Make Something Unreal finals, this WWII mod is the community's answer to *Call Of Duty*.
2. **ALIEN SWARM** Proving that originality isn't dead, this top-down tactical mod pitches marines against aliens.
3. **AIR BUCCANEERS** If pirates could fly, this would be their mod of choice. Brilliant and beautiful at the same time. Yarrrrrr!
4. **UNWHEEL** Taking *UT2004* vehicles to a new extreme, petrol-heads are catered for by the wide selection of vehicles on offer.
5. **FRAG OPS** If the above prove just too much, this near-future, semi-realistic mod provides a more down-to-earth setting.

RAINBOW SIX 3: IRON WRATH

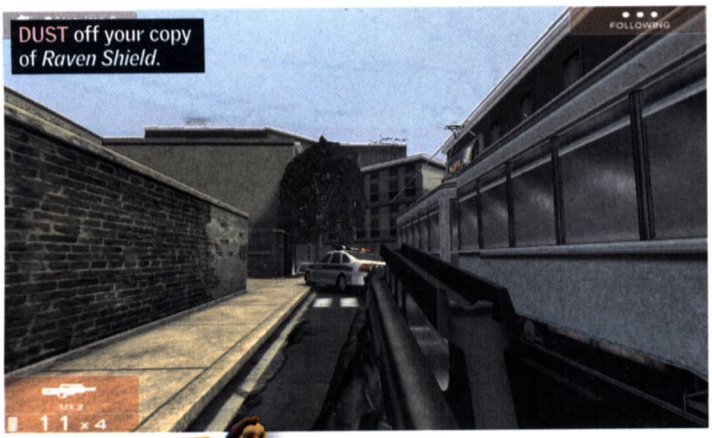
DVD ONLY

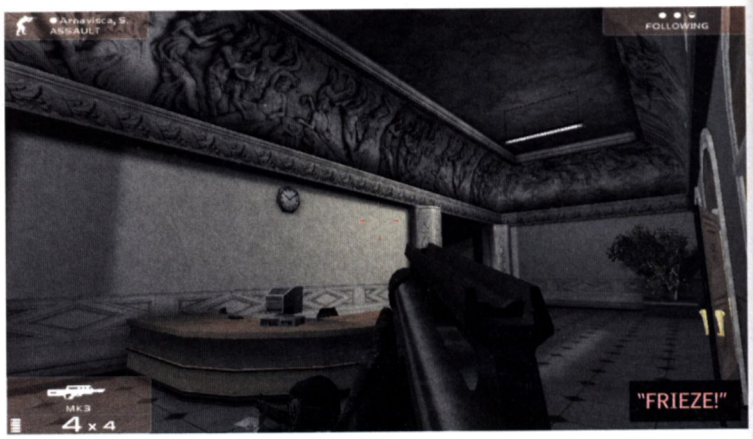
PLAY: ADD-ON



dnet.3dgamers.com/promotions/ironwrath

An explosive add-on to a game that's older than most peoples PCs – and it's free!





CLASSIC: MOD

THE SHIP

Get away with murder in *Half-Life*

MOST MODS FALL into one of two categories: half-baked movie rip-offs or hardcore 'realism' updates. Few dabble in the world of what we like to call 'fun'. *The Ship* not only aims itself at the fun-loving crowd, but barrel rolls firmly into them.

The premise is a mix of Agatha Christie whodunnit and one of those 'host a murder' dinner party games. Rather than just stomp around the '30s-style cruise liner stabbing, shooting and slaughtering anything that moves, each player is assigned a specific target to bump off and must wander around, identifying fellow players and then murdering the right one on the sly.

It's a game of subtlety and paranoia, and one of the most underrated mods ever created for *Half-Life*.

IF YOU'VE purchased the DVD edition of *PC ZONE*, then we've got some good news for you. This free, official add-on for *Rainbow Six 3* is on your coverdisc. All you need to do to play it is get yourself a registration key (also free), obtainable at the web address above. Unfortunately, if **you've got the CD edition you'll have to download the add-on from the likes of FilePlanet or 3DGamers, as the 1GB file just wouldn't fit on those ageing silver discs. (Tip: upgrade to a DVD drive today!)**

Once you've installed the file, you get a juicy bundle of extras. No less than six new real-world weapons (including the Auto SG Jackhammer shotgun and the Type 89F Assault Rifle), a new seven-mission single-player campaign, plus optimisation of a few old missions (Eagle Watch, Iron Thunder and Iron Comet) and five new multiplayer modes.

Set mainly in the Middle East, *Iron Wrath* features a mix of open and closed scenarios – from a sniper-friendly oil refinery to embassies and tunnels bristling with terrorists and hostages.

The new multiplayer modes also mix old and new, with 'Free Backup' and 'Virus' being variations of Deathmatch and Capture the Flag, whereas 'Limited Seats' has you ferrying hostages back to a safe house, and 'Gas Alert' sees you rushing from point to point to renew your dwindling 30-second air-supply. Finally, the excellent 'Intruder' has you trying to destroy terminals while unmasking the interloper in your own team.

Some of these modes have the potential to become firm favourites in other games, so congrats to Ubisoft Casablanca for thinking them up, as well as providing so much free content for an old FPS favourite.



PLAY: MOD

CD & DVD

cs.punkassfraggers.com

PAF CS: SOURCE SPLASH PACK



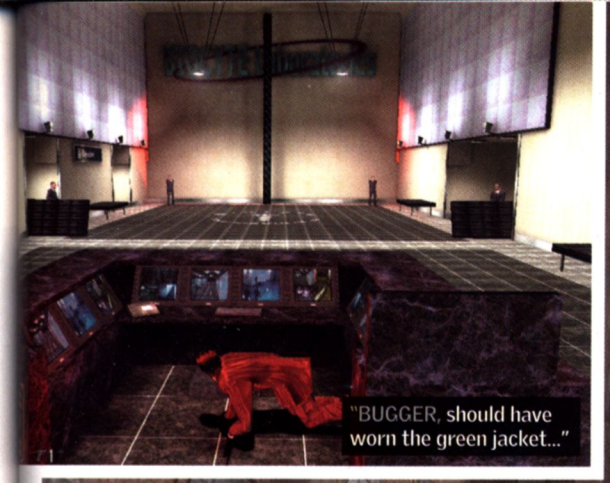
Suzy Wallace feels the winds of change, blowing through the arid confines of de_dust

ALONG WITH TAXES, death and knowing that although you've been waiting for a bus for an hour, the second you decide to spark up a cigarette four will turn up at once, change is an inevitable staple of life.

Embracing this concept wholeheartedly, the top chaps at Punk Ass Fraggers have brought you this splash pack for *Counter-Strike: Source*. So far it's proved a massive success on the website, with an impressive 16,000 users having downloaded it so far. But what makes it so special? Well, the pack is probably one of the most comprehensive around, replacing or adding more than an incredible 1,000 files!

Making up the numbers are a variety of new player models, new props, updated de_dust textures and some new custom sounds, though the majority of the pack is made up of a veritable arsenal of new and improved weapons. In fact, there's enough firepower here to make your average third-world dictator weep (the Vulcan Minigun is our particular favourite).

Quite simply, if you can't get enough of the gameplay, but have got bored of looking at the same old scenery, install this pack and breathe new life into your *Counter-Strike: Source*.


"BUGGER, should have worn the green jacket..."

THESE invisible chairs are amazing.

"I REALLY should lay off the 'shrooms..."

PLAY: MOD

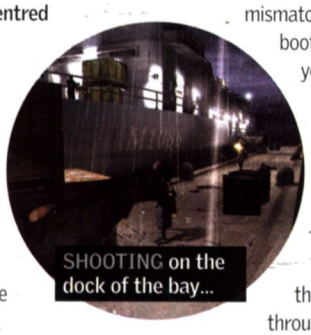
MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE NEW DAWN

newdawn.paynereactor.com

Will Porter gets his monthly fix of Payne...

WE'RE NOT ALLOWED to run this mod on our discs due to the liberal use of the *M:I-2* soundtrack, but it remains a superbly designed, Ethan Hunt-centred affair that fans of Max Payne, and his slo-mo shenanigans, should certainly chance a download on.

The environments you fight in bear a faint resemblance to John Woo's take on the comings and goings of the IMF, and the lead bears a faint resemblance to Tom Cruise. But what makes *Mission: Impossible – New Dawn* stand out from the crowd are some wonderfully designed sequences and set pieces that belie the mod's fan-made origins.


SHOOTING on the dock of the bay...

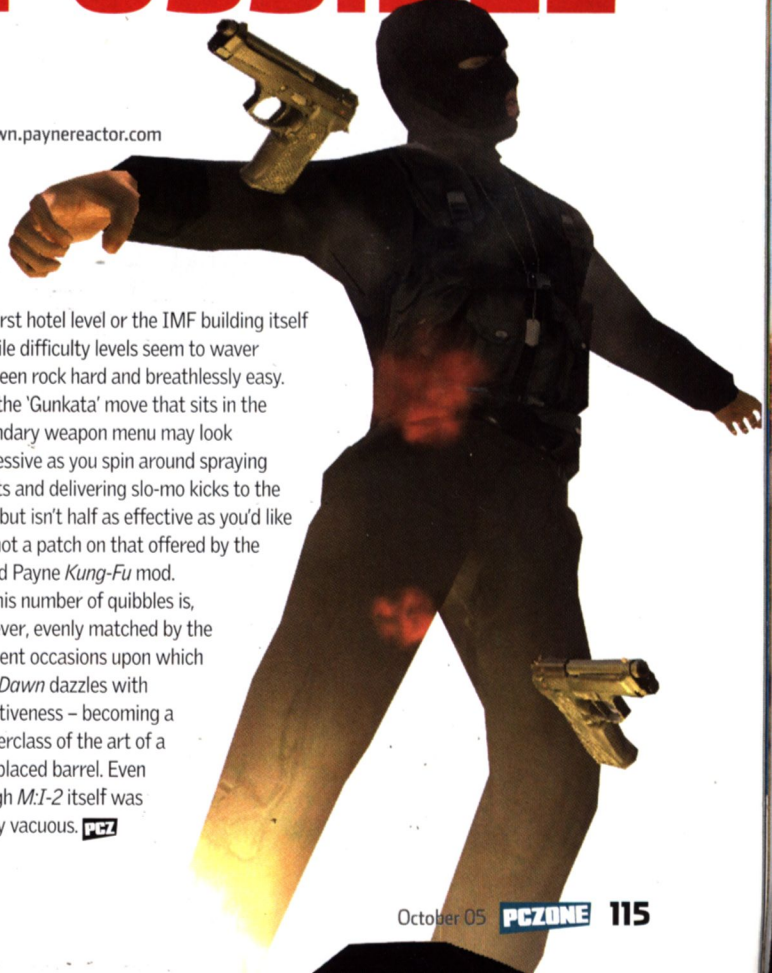
Yes, certain identical rooms and textures are on heavy rotation. Yes, the script is nothing short of diabolical, while the voice-acting is monotonous and completely mismatched. But if you're still booting up *Payne* and sunning yourself in his stupid ragdolls and spinny-camera tricks, then you'll find that *New Dawn* replicates them with aplomb, while still having a few scripted (yet brilliant) surprises up its sleeve.

The helicopter that ignites the street around you halfway through the game is perhaps the stand-out example.

FILLING TIME

Unfortunately, away from these moments of greatness there's a lot of filler – not least in the first hotel level or the IMF building itself – while difficulty levels seem to waver between rock hard and breathlessly easy. And the 'Gunkata' move that sits in the secondary weapon menu may look impressive as you spin around spraying bullets and delivering slo-mo kicks to the face, but isn't half as effective as you'd like and not a patch on that offered by the famed Payne *Kung-Fu* mod.

This number of quibbles is, however, evenly matched by the frequent occasions upon which *New Dawn* dazzles with inventiveness – becoming a masterclass of the art of a well-placed barrel. Even though *M:I-2* itself was pretty vacuous. PCZ



Fight Club

First rule of Fight Club: there are no rules

ALL THE LATEST FIGHT CLUB INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT www.zonegames.co.uk





HELLO ladies.

BEWARE, EVIL-DOERS! The *PC ZONE* Super League Of Justice Friends is on hand to root out crime, prune the weeds of terror and stamp out the flaming dog shit bag of naughtiness wherever it may lurk. Or to get stomped on by more powerful heroes in the PVP arena in *City Of Heroes* at any rate.

Yes, a welcome second bash at the super-powered MMO was unfortunately tempered by certain recent real-world events, causing our London-based crew to sadly abandon proceedings, although Prezzer did manage to establish a connection to the ether and jump in for a slightly truncated night of mayhem.

A bigger turnout than last time too, with word of mouth obviously having spread – who doesn't like the chance to repeatedly pummel a Z-list celebrity into barely recognisable pulp? Many thanks if you joined in and our apologies for the shortened nature. Normal service should hopefully be resumed for our next event.

To join us in a future Fight Club, simply head to www.zonegames.co.uk to see a list of upcoming games and dates. On the horizon are *Battlefield 2*, *SWAT 4* and *Counter-Strike: Source* matches, as well as a return to the spandex-coated world of *City Of Heroes* (most likely in time for the *City Of Villains* expansion). You can send suggestions and requests for future games to fightclub@pczone.co.uk. You'll also find the most current list of games being played on the *PC ZONE* public gaming servers (see list, right), so even if we can't take you on, you'll always be able to find a fellow *ZONE* reader up for a scrap. *PC ZONE*, bringing the world together through the medium of conflict. Makes you feel warm and fuzzy, don't it?



A tender moment mid-scrap.



PREZZER'S team prepares for action.

ZONE CHAT

Like talking, but without the noise

Finally, we've gotten rid of that Prezzer & Will graphic. Honestly, we're much better looking in real life. Prez doesn't look like Ted Bovis from *Hi-De-Hi* for a start, and Will's eyes are almost entirely normal-sized. Anyway, it may be a brand new look, but it's still the same old *ZONE* Chat nonsense. Just tighter! Better looking! And with actual *ZONE* staff turning up! Yes, sorry about last month's rather miniscule effort. We can only blame pressures of magazine deadlines and Martian invaders (or something).

From now on you'll be able to get all the information on future *ZONE* Chat sessions from www.zonegames.co.uk, along with transcripts of past sessions, in case you couldn't make it or feel like reliving past glories. Hurrah for us!

WHO'S WHO?

Up to the minute server information can be located at www.zonegames.co.uk!

Jamie Sefton PCZ_NorthernScum
Paul Presley – PCZ_Prezzer
Will Porter – PCZ_Batsphinx
Suzy Wallace – PCZ_Uzibat
Jamie Malcolm – PCZ_JimLad



COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE
cs1.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs2.zonegames.co.uk:27025



HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27055



HALF-LIFE DEATHMATCH
hl.zonegames.co.uk:27035



TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045



CALL OF DUTY
cod.zonegames.co.uk:28960



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
ut1.zonegames.co.uk:7777
ut2.zonegames.co.uk:8888



WOLFENSTEIN: ENEMY TERRITORY
et.zonegames.co.uk:27960



SAVAGE
savage.zonegames.co.uk:11235



JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING
Listed on NovaWorld

Readers' Challenge

Hosted by Jolt Online Gaming

Sign up for action and top prizes at www.pczone.jolt.co.uk!





1 PAINKILLER 1V1

QUARTER FINALS

Zaccubus 28-12	24-15 Garpy
FA 10-26	6-24 Acelethal
Aim 16-19	10-14 KuuLa
Siguma 26-22	24-18 Maddog

SEMI FINALS

Zaccubus 20-1	20-16 Acelethal
KuuLa 30-19	24-21 Siguma

FINAL

Zaccubus 12-29 26-16 14-15 KuuLa

WINNER

Dan 'KuuLa' Marshall

2 BATTLEFIELD 2 – 8V8

SEMI FINALS

Team Dignitas 59	48 FC
Cloud 9 162	0 Wilda

FINAL

Team Dignitas 13 55 Cloud 9

WINNER

Cloud 9

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ASUS HEART OF TECHNOLOGY
The V9950 series from leading graphics card manufacturer Asus takes GeForce FX performance to a new level.

CORSAIR
The XMS product line is Corsair's premium desktop product family and are the world's most highly awarded memory chips.

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Logitech raises the bar in gaming precision and performance with the MX 510 mouse and Internet Navigator SE Keyboard.

Western Digital
The Western Digital Raptor is a new class of hard drive that matches SCSI reliability and performance.

MSI MICRO-STAR INTERNATIONAL
A world leader in the motherboard industry, MSI's K7N2 supports the latest AthlonXP and Duron processors.

PLANTRONICS
Plantronics USB headset with DSP (digital signal processing) with maximum bass response for enhanced for gaming.

jolt online gaming
The home of online gaming, Jolt provides services from basic *Quake* clan ports to managed corporate game server solutions.

EVERY GAME! EVERY FORMAT! EVERY MONTH!



HOW TO...
Make a game PART ONE

Dan Marshall strikes out on his own...



ONE MAN, one bedroom and one PC. It's how games were made yesterday, but is it still possible today? That's my brief for this six-part series: to go back to the days of bedroom coding and sit in my pants for six months until I've produced a game worthy of the *ZONE* name, despite not knowing anything about anything. For the record, I can't even afford to eat today, because I've just shelled out my last 20 quid on *How To Code C++ For Complete Dipshits*. Ah, the glamour.

The game I'm (hopefully) going to create is called *Gibbage*. I say 'game', but as I'm desperately trying to learn the basics of programming, I use the term in a perversely loose sense. So far, I've managed to produce a black screen with some white text that asks you to 'input a letter'. When you do this it cleverly tells you you've "pressed letter X!" Oh, and it crashes if you press something obscure like a comma. Perhaps I could get a job on *Champ Man*...

The Pitch

You've got two minutes to impress me...

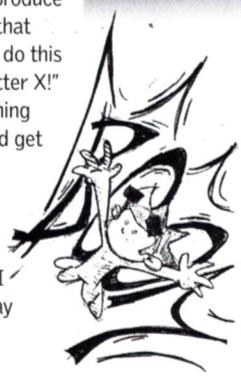
It might sound obvious, but if you're dead-set on making a game you need to have an idea to work with. Mine is *Gibbage*, a two-player cartoon deathmatch affair. I started off by getting a general design concept in place, including artwork and ideas for levels, and then I started ploughing into the books. If all goes according to my rather ambitious plans, the cartoon look of *Gibbage* will be offset with extreme violence and high gore levels, with settings ranging from inner-city slums to zombie-infested shopping malls and the innards of a gargantuan alien beast. Aim high, that's what I say.

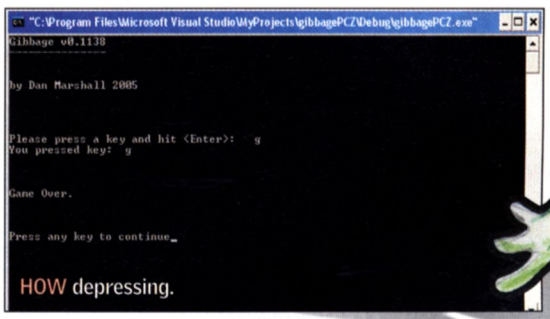
CHAMPIONSHIP PROGRAMMER 05/06

Or perhaps I've bitten off more than I can chew. I've certainly got a long way to go before I get to *Tetris*, let alone *UT2004*. Hell, at this stage, I'd be ecstatic if I could make a simple shape move from left to right across the screen but, truth be told, I haven't a clue.

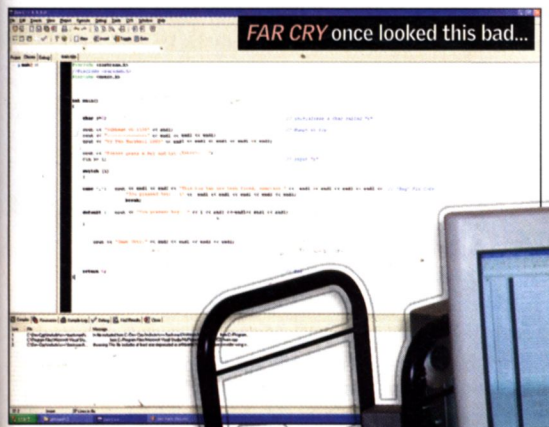
And scarily, what you see here in these screenshots is the result of two months nigh-on solid labour. I'm staying up late poring over programming tutorials, and I'm getting up early to read some more before work. I've caught strangers on the tube edging away from me with their copies of *The Da Vinci Code* because I'm glued to *Game Programming Made Easy*. Ah, if only this encoded gibberish were to make sense in the next chapter...

So in answer to the question that this series is poised to crack – can you, without any prior knowledge, code your own game from scratch?





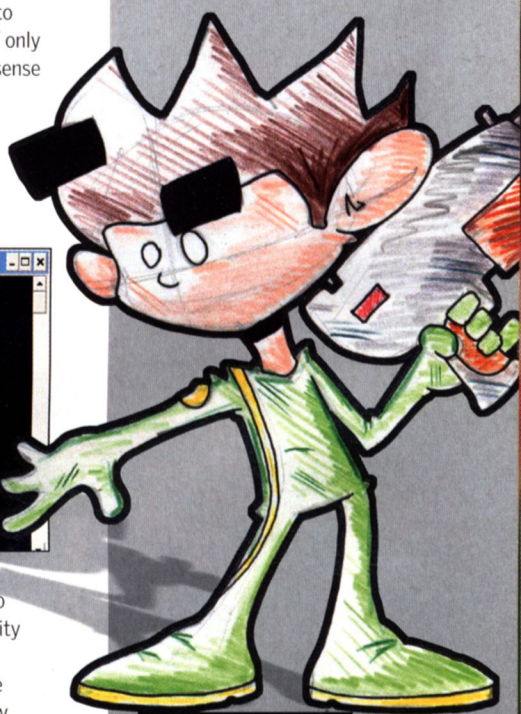
HOW depressing.



FAR CRY once looked this bad...

– the answer so far is a pretty resounding no. Still, I'm no quitter. I'll keep on at it, regardless of the cost to my sanity and my social life.

My target for next month is to crack 'Sprite Manipulation'. If you're not old enough to know what that means, it's going to put us somewhere around 1989. Keep the faith comrade, keep the faith... PCZ



I'M not a professional artist, either...

THE workstation at the very pinnacle of the videogame industry.

I've caught strangers on the tube edging away from me with their copies of *The Da Vinci Code* because I'm glued to *Game Programming Made Easy*

Need:
A lot of patience
Idiot's Guide to C++
Teach Yourself C++ in 21 Days
C For Dummies



Time:
Six months

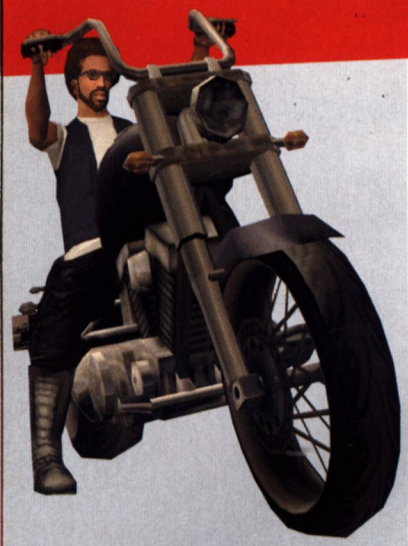
What you'll get:
A text adventure ✓
Poorer ✓
Shunned in public ✓
A job at Eidos ✗

If you want more...

www.gamedev.net
An excellent site for beginners, where you can ask as many stupid questions as you like without getting flamed.

www.gamasutra.com
This isn't programming-based as such, but has tons of articles on game design and concepting. For when you're feeling bogged down in code and need to step back.

www.indiegamer.com
Business-slanted, but some important threads nevertheless.





Find the cool bizniz in GTA: San Andreas

Sam Kieldsen is your guide to all things bling...

WHEN IT COMES to Easter Eggs, in-jokes, pop culture references and cool little bits and pieces shoved in here and there, few games can match *GTA: San Andreas*. Far bigger than Vice City and Liberty City combined, the state of San Andreas contains enough content (besides the 100-plus story missions) to keep all but the pickiest of gamers occupied for several months.

What's more, because we care, we've trawled *San Andreas* for some of the best examples, so you can wring even more gaming enjoyment out of Rockstar's classic. Ready?

Need:
Retail copy of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*
Time to fritter away

What you'll get:
Enviable *San Andreas* knowledge ✓
Rude bits ✓
A pimp outfit ✓
P Diddy's crib with a hot tub full of honeyz ✗

01 Like, Gnarly

It's no secret that Rockstar has added parachutes to the game – in fact they're essential in several of the story missions – but their use isn't limited to mere bailing-out duties. Ascend a high mountain or skyscraper (the tallest buildings in Los Santos and San Fierro can be entered at ground level), ready your chute and indulge in that most extreme of sports: base jumping. Radical, etc.





02 Pimp That Ride

Time to polish up those spoilers, Trevor...

It has little effect on gameplay, but customising your car is a delight. You can choose the colour, specify special one-off paint jobs, bolt on chromed-out wheels or bumpers and even add some extra grunt in the form of a nitrous oxide injection. Our personal favourite is the hydraulics, best used while listening to Ice Cube's *Today Was A Good Day* on Radio Los Santos. Hit that three-wheel motion, homeboy.

03 Ooh, Hark At Her

Rockstar North's puerile sense of humour is well known – heck, we love it – and the company is certainly not above the odd bitchy in-game comment directed at rival developers. Listen as Mad Dogg's bodyguards berate a videogame character called 'Tanner' in a thinly-veiled attack on *Driv3r*, see the billboard advertising 'True Grime' or visit the San Fierro war memorial, filled with graves marked 'RIP Opposition 1997-2004.' Chortle.

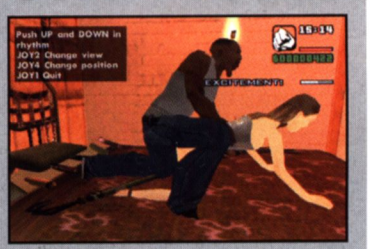
04 Always Wanted One Of Those...

Gain 100 per cent progress with the in-game girlfriends (that's a lot of dancing, gift-giving and dinner dates, folks) to receive a special wearable present. Denise gives you a pimp outfit, Michelle a racing suit, Barbara a cop uniform, Katie a medic uniform, Helena some country-fied clothes, and Millie, er, actually gives you nothing. We guess the gimp suit counts as hers.



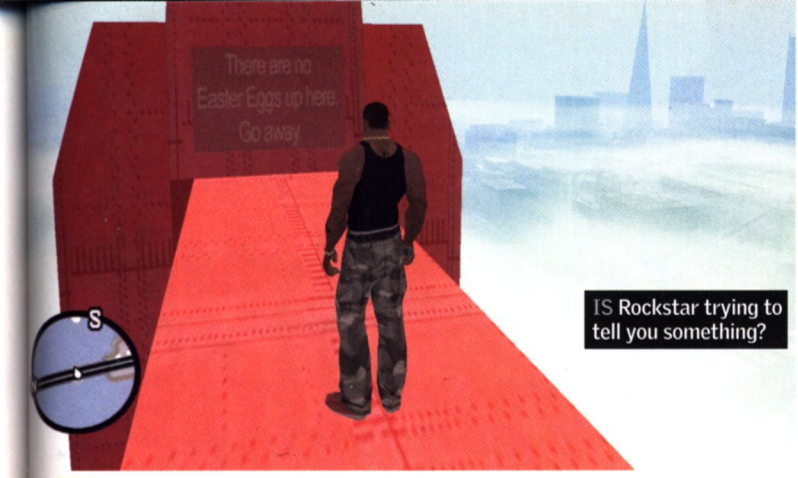


WE ARE THE MODS



If you've been following recent US news, then you'll be aware of the storm of controversy going on over the *GTA: San Andreas Hot Coffee* mod. As reported last issue, *Hot Coffee* enables you to participate in the act of CJ humping his girlfriend, a scene once intended as a mini-game but locked out of the final version. As we go to press, Coffeegate continues apace, creating the biggest nudity-is-evil row since Janet Jackson noticed a slight breeze around her nip. At last count the game had been re-rated, banned in Australia, remastered without the tepid caffeine and discussed not once but twice in Congress. To top it off, Rockstar is being sued by a vengeful granny. As a result of all this, the mod is no longer available at the original host site (www.gtagarage.com), but we're sure you could find a copy if you hung around the right dark alleys.

Meanwhile, a mod that doesn't make us want to take a shower is *Multi Theft Auto: San Andreas*, from the clever folks who brought us the original *Multi Theft Auto*. You can see it in action in a video at www.mtasa.com. Similar mods in the works include *San Andreas Multiplayer* (www.sa-mp.com), *San Andreas 2-player* (www.sa-2p.com) and *GTA: Tournament* (dracoblue.gamehost.at/gtat).



IS Rockstar trying to tell you something?

05 A Bridge Too Far

If you're not yet convinced that the *GTA* games are clued-up, self-aware and thoroughly postmodern (or something), what about this Easter Egg that, well, isn't an Easter Egg. Get to the top of the Gant Bridge in San Fierro (the jetpack is the easiest way) and read the message left by the developer. Those crazy wags...



THE Rhino Tank. Not one to get in the way of.

06 Tanks For The Lift

Bored with normal vehicles? Then hop over the fence of the Area 69 military base just outside Las Venturas and – providing you survive the authorities' response – pinch some serious hardware: the Rhino tank. Boasting a cannon and some nigh-on impenetrable armour, this baby is the perfect tool for when you get that rampagin' feelin'.



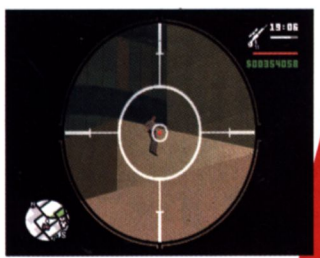
ALL the fun, without a pesky alien to please.



07 Blast From The Past

Before Rockstar North was Rockstar North, it was called DMA Design, a company best known for creating the *Lemmings* games. Walk into the alleyway behind the Las Venturas gym (go through the garage), look at the building across the street and you'll see what can only be a reference to those venerable puzzlers: pedestrians blithely walking off the roof and plummeting into the road below.





08 Do An Elliott

Is it a bloke? Is it a bike? Both, actually...

Many an *ET* fan has longed to copy Elliott and friends by riding a flying bike, but a dearth of friendly aliens has made this an impossibility. *San Andreas* has the answer: the bike at the summit of Mount Chiliad. Using the observation platform as a ramp, you can glide gracefully into the clear blue yonder. Do remember to pack a 'chute though, or you're in for a bumpy landing. PCZ

Make a successful games magazine

Seven simple steps to fame and fortune...



Need:
A massive publishing company willing to launch your title, or...
A PC, book of contacts, telephone, A4 paper, printer, stapler, a big bag and a bicycle

Time:
Approximately 28 days

What you'll get:
Free games ✓
Free lunches ✓
Meagre wage packet ✓
60-hour working weeks ✓
Z-List celebs wanting to sleep with you ✗

MAGAZINES COME AND go, but launched in 1993, *PC ZONE* is the UK's longest-running dedicated PC games mag, and over the years we've seen off rivals left and centre. We've been hassled and harried to reveal our formula, but we've kept schtum. Until now. Finally, we're lifting the lid on the secrets behind the glossy covers. Just how do you make a magazine as consistently brilliant as *PC ZONE*? Simple – follow these golden rules...

01 The Front Cover

First things first...

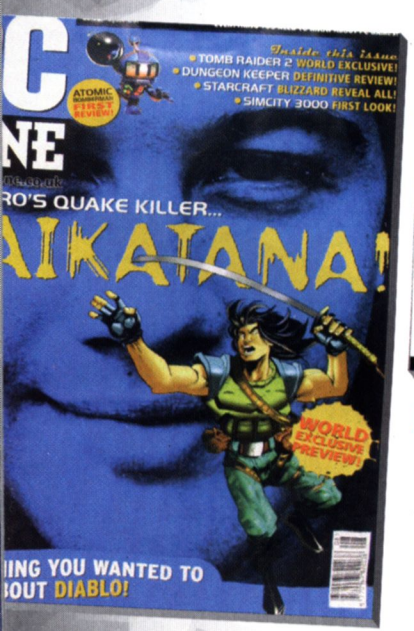
Obviously the most important part of any magazine, the cover is your public face, the part that people poke and prod before reaching for a cheaper, inferior rival. Get this right and you'll shift copies by the truckload, saving you the embarrassment of hiring a ship to dump thousands of unwanted copies off the coast of Norway to secure decent sales figures.

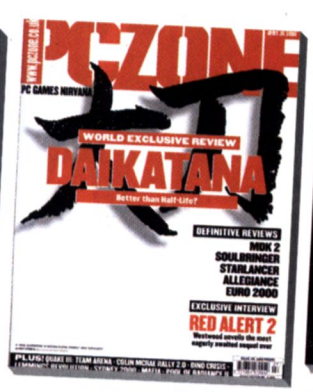


Sell Your Soul

Issue 19 – October 1994

A completely made-up rule states that you've got approximately ten seconds to engage the heart and soul of the casual browser, which is why a successful cover has immediacy, eye contact and, preferably, a naked woman on the front. Being a games mag you can't justify this, but you can hire an attractive woman who's never played a game in her life, ask her to wear a futuristic helmet, pull a confused expression and call it the future. Virtual Reality? Here... now... and on PC! Apparently.

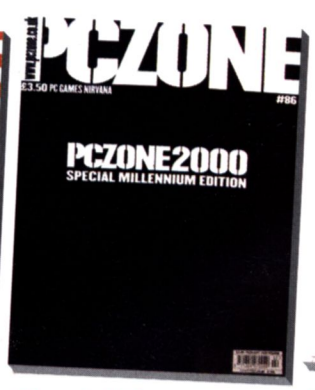




Know Your Subject

Issues 53/91 – Aug 97/July 02

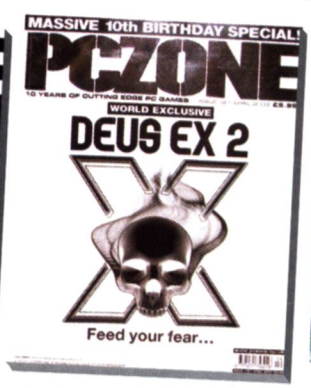
Never put shit on your cover, literally or figuratively. You're supposed to be the experts, after all. However, if shit happens, and it undoubtedly will, steer into the swerve. Repeat the 'mistake' five years later, confusing people into thinking you were right all along. Aha!



Special Treatments

Issue 86 – Millennium Edition

It's the turn of the millennium. An event so huge that only 0.01% of the Earth's population ever get to see it. But what to put on the most important cover since Jesus was invented? We decided black. Don't applaud, it's just what we do.



Be Your Own Boss

Issue 127 – April 2004

If you think *Deus Ex: Invisible War* is a knob name, ignore it and call it *Deus Ex 2*. Snappier, right? Eidos didn't think so and threatened to pull the mag, sulked, then decided it actually liked it and could it use it in its marketing campaign? Tsk.



Finally...

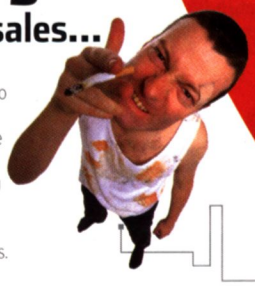
Issue 105

You only get the one chance, so spellcheck, spellcheck and then spellcheck some more. And then nervously press the send button. And then frantically call the printers and get them to burn the ones with any glaringly obvious errors on.

02 Staying On The Shelves – A Lesson In Logic

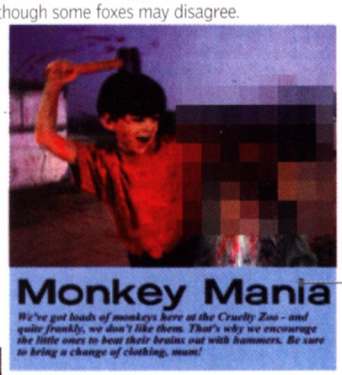
Four steps to increased sales...





1 If you want people to buy your magazine, you have to remain on the shelves. If you want to remain on the shelves you have to avoid angering people who get annoyed very easily. People like this.

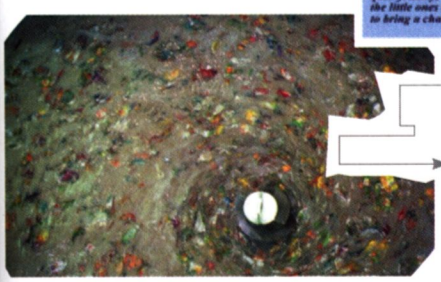
2 If you want to avoid pissing off people like this, something you should really, really avoid is printing a cartoon that involves a child brutally hammering a hapless monkey to death. It may be funny, but unfortunately this sort of thing just isn't done in middle-England. Although some foxes may disagree.



Monkey Mania

We've got loads of monkeys here at the Cruelty Zoo - and quite frankly, we don't like them. That's why we encourage the little ones to beat their brains out with hammers. Be sure to bring a change of clothing, mum!

3 If you do carelessly print a picture of a mutilated monkey, then people will run to phone boxes and telephone magazine stockists and perhaps even the national media. You will be in big trouble.



4 So much trouble that your magazine will be ripped from the shelves and pulped. And issue number 60 of *PC ZONE* will be little more than a collector's item.

04 Win! Free! Sex!

Now that we've got your attention...

Pop into your local newsagents and you'll find 1,673* different magazines, all calling for your cash. Which one do you choose? The one with the best free gift on the cover obviously. The perfect giveaway has to appeal to as wide an audience as possible (free money stapled to the front being the holy grail), which is why our bosses were over the moon when we announced that back in Christmas 2002 (the time of giving), we'd secured the exclusive rights to the *Age Of Mythology* soundtrack, featuring epic tracks like *Cat Named Mittens* and *Eat Your Potatoes*. The sales literally flooded in...

* Figure collated yesterday



NO, THERE aren't any left.

03 Hierarchy

With a capital huh

If you're the punter and you're not convinced by the front cover, your next step is to browse. Open a page of any magazine and you're presented with an alarming mass of words and pictures that can, in more serious cases, lead to epilepsy. As your eyes scan desperately for a crumb of comfort, nine times out of ten you'll end up on a headline or a caption. Put your best work into these and half your job's done.



ISSUE 119: Fine examples of lovingly-crafted captions. It makes all the difference.



Culky's Tank

05 Be Nice...

To big companies

You rely on them for review code, demos and free lunches. Under no circumstances should you ever enter the car park of say, EA, and fire rockets at its premises from a modified VW Beatle. If you do, don't film it and put in on your cover disc for the whole world to see. It might put the *FIFA* developers off their stroke.

And industry heavyweights

Developers make games. You need access to games. Be nice to developers. If you're not nice to developers you may lose that valuable exclusive, or worse, be shunned and ignored at industry parties...

06 Politics

Stand up for the gaming issues that matter

PC ZONE has always been a radical magazine, and there's nothing we like better (apart from the occasional tipple) is to fight for injustice around the world on behalf of our PC gaming brothers and sisters. A couple of years ago, those hummus-eating, olive tree-planting, Euro 2004-winning Greeks passed a law that effectively banned videogames. Obviously, this was a situation *PC ZONE* couldn't allow to happen, so with a quickly improvised sign, our own Steve Hill and Martin Korda set off to protest outside the Greek embassy in London.

Unfortunately, an over-zealous security guard with a Zorba moustache took exception to this proud expression of solidarity with our gaming comrades, and promptly chased them down the street with what looked like a butcher's knife. A passing cab was hurriedly hailed and our two brave protestors fled the scene. Shortly afterwards, the Greek government repealed the law. A coincidence? We think not.



HILL asserts his right to peaceful protest, shortly before running away like a frightened girl.



ISSUE 148: 'RING DEATH'? That explains the 18-certificate then.

07 Advertising

Because we're living in a material world...

It's a sad fact, but in this modern world your magazine won't survive without advertising. So employ, and be nice, to an ad monkey, doff your cap towards ad agencies and always make sure that the ads are placed correctly if you want them to pay up. (And remember, there's no other reason to have them inside your magazine.)

08 Stick to your guns You are always right...

And your reviews are always right, even when they don't meet the lofty expectations of some jumped-up bean-counter. If said jumped-up bean-counter sends an army of suits to complain about a review score, you must put your career on the line in the face of editorial integrity. Do not print a letter of apology, exhorting readers to ignore your review. (If you accidentally print a letter of apology exhorting readers to ignore your review, extract yourself from a potentially embarrassing predicament by re-reviewing the same game in a later issue and awarding it the same score.) PCZ



Did you know...?

That *PC ZONE* has scientifically applied the aforementioned rules to itself and this is the end result. A new, somewhat improved *PC ZONE*, that has love to spare.

Did you know...?

The best bit about a redesign is the knowledge that in six years time your hard work is going to end up the butt of a cheap joke.

THE HOTTEST NEWS ON THE PLANET...

COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAMES .COM

CVG



FROM EUROPE'S NO.1 GAMING WEBSITE



3+ www.pegi.info

PC CD ROM

Mac

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The No.1 best-seller returns for a new season

Stick to a winning formula and risk complacency? Or make some radical changes that could end in your name being chanted on the terraces, or plastered all over the press.

Then there's the squad to hand pick, the training to restructure, the media mind-games to master, not to mention your own future to secure. One thing's for sure, this season, it's going to be tougher than ever.



Half time team talks:

A collective kick up the backside, or a quiet word in the ear of the ball-shy millionaire you're regretting buying? Lift the players as individuals or come down on them as a team as a whole? This is your 15 minutes to take control of the game.



Training module:

Monitor every element of your players' performance, from their stamina to their state of mind, so you can see who's fit for the starting line-up and who's ready for the transfer list. Whether you work them into the ground, or give them a rest, with the right tweaks to the training schedule, you might just turn a one trick pony into a utility player, or improve that wasteful winger's crossing.



Player interaction:

This is more than tactics and tantrums. You need to know just how to manage a player to get the best out of them. If you don't, they'll soon be airing their grievances in public, before slapping in their transfer requests. It's going to test your man-management skills to keep morale high.



Snapshot:

You can't just pull game-winning strategies out of the air. You need all of the information at your fingertips, all of the time. Latest players stats, up-coming fixtures, league tables, not to mention how much is left in the transfer budget and whether it's about time you put in for a wage increase.

Football Manager 2006. It's going to take a new style of management if you're going to triumph this season. It's more sophisticated, more demanding and more addictive than ever before, with fresh challenges to overcome and new features to master.

It takes heart to be a fan.
It takes guts to be a manager.

FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006™

HOW WILL YOU MANAGE?

www.footballmanager.net

www.sigames.com

SEGA®

www.sega.co.uk

Lost and found

In this feature you'll find out...

That abandonware is technically illegal ✓
Where to find *System Shock 2* ✓
Where to download a cracked copy of *Doom 3* ✗
That dogs are just for Christmas ✗
That ELSPA likes reading the Old Testament and would like to get busy on your ass ✗

SHAME ON YOU!

It's not just games that get abandoned...

Dogs
They really aren't just for Christmas you know. And unlike crocs, you can't just flush them down the toilet when they piss on your shoes.

Broken Fridges
Think of the environment. And the small children that crawl into them never to be seen again. On second thoughts...

Babies
Oh look, isn't it sweet, look at those little fingers, he's absolutely adorable. Hang on what's that smell...

Shopping Trollies
Unless they're fitted with those anti-theft devices that also stop you actually using them in the supermarket.

***Pavel Barter* sniffs around the fetid corpse of gaming's past and discovers some serious abandonment issues**

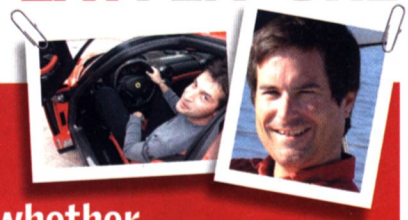


CONSPIRACY THEORISTS, sexual deviants, dwarf tossers: the World Wide Web is stuffed with all manner of weirdos, but videogame necrophiliacs are the most intriguing of them all. These Dr Frankensteins dig up classic PC titles, left for dead by publishers, and jolt them back to life with old-fashioned love and affection. While some insist that abandonware is just another word for 'thieving bastardry', others argue that it was sent from heaven to preserve your gaming heritage.

Sites like Home Of The Underdogs, Abandonia and Computer Games Archive (CGA) have enough members to populate a small country, but it's 2005 and there's a new *Call Of Duty* sequel on the way, so what's the appeal?

"Abandonware is popular because loads of people loved these games when they were younger and you can't find them in the shops," declares CGA's Res Scholten. "Titles such as 3DO's *Heroes Of Might And Magic*, Maxis' *SimCity 2000* and many others."

Take a classic game like *System Shock 2* – you can't buy this new, only from places like eBay and only if you're



FIGHT! David Vs David

Elite's David Braben and *Enter The Matrix's* David Perry on whether abandonware providers are software historians or thieving tinkers

DP: "I'm a massive fan of protecting the history of the videogame business... I hope the passion never dies and that my grandchildren can look back and see what we were involved in."

DB: "The rather dodgy veneer of 'historian' would appear more believable if these sites didn't carry so much advertising, and actually went into the history of the games, rather than bragging about how many games are available 'for free' on a particular site."

DP: "Quite honestly, most of the companies that owned the properties no longer exist and the original authors have no possible way to make money from the games any more, so personally I'd sign any petition to make those public domain and preserve them safely for good."

DB: "I realise it is great to have these games available for download – and many have been made available as shareware or even freeware by their original authors. Hopefully this will continue, but the grasping, tacky nature of the abandonware/piracy 'scene' discourages this in my book. Abandonware is simply the latest attempt to make piracy appear acceptable, and another way to make money online from the adverts these sites all seem to carry."

What do you think – theft or conservation? Let us know now or forever hold your peace: letters@pczone.co.uk

prepared to pay a price; but visit the Underdogs site and it's there for the taking. Problem is, unlike traditional criminal activities, the rights and wrongs of abandonware are ambiguous. Copyright of these games is rarely defended, either because the owners can't be arsed enforcing it, or because they perished in bizarre gardening accidents.

MAKING CRIMINALS

So does that give you the freedom to run amok like Baghdad looters? Um, no, not really. According to Mike Rawlinson of the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association (ELSPA), if the copyright owners haven't released these games as 'freeware' then distribution is illegal. "ELSPA treats any sale of pirated goods seriously, and if a trader is selling such software (regardless of a game's status) they are committing a criminal offence, and will be prosecuted."

Publishers don't tend to be that heavy-handed, but do uphold the equation that abandonware = very naughty, since free distribution of their antiquated games could harm future re-releases.

"As a company, we do not endorse abandonware at all," says Codemasters' Sam Cordier. "Besides, who makes the decision that software has been abandoned? It certainly isn't us, and as the proprietary owners we are the only people who should be able to dictate whether something has been abandoned."

> **Since [VU] now own the rights to the characters and games I created, there's nothing I can do**
> Al Lowe, creator of Leisure Suit Larry



On the other hand, developers like Al Lowe (creator of perv-em-up *Leisure Suit Larry*) would rather his "games were played than hidden away in a vault."

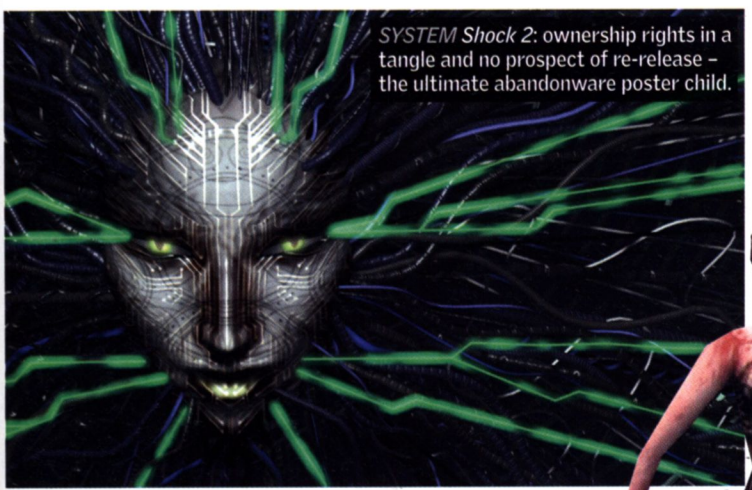
A sentiment not shared, funnily enough, by Vivendi Universal Games. Says Lowe: "[VU] refuse to produce or sell my games and they refuse to allow others to do so. And since they now own all the rights to the characters and games I created for Sierra over the years, there's legally nothing I can do. I even asked them to let me post my games on my website so players could download them, but they've refused." This rigid stance from VU is hardly the most enlightened, and will surely only add to the list of developers wanting to wrest the rights of their IPs back from publishers, a la Valve.

Now, we don't profess to be experts in multinational thievery, but we must say that we think certain publishers' attitudes are, shall we say, not the most broad-minded. Thankfully, companies like Rockstar and Revolution take a different view and have made some of their earlier games available for free. As these are technically freeware, not abandonware, we're not covering them here, but we will continue to showcase them in the future.

RESPECT

If everyone took the same approach, the issue of abandonware and its murky morality/legality issues would be moot. We'd also love to meet the person that can tell us that by offering *GTA* and *GTA 2* to download for free, Rockstar has damaged its sales. As the company says on its website, "Respect is everything". Other publishers take heed.

So how does abandonware survive this moral quagmire? There's a tendency for copyright holders to turn a blind eye to sites like the Underdogs, and abandonware distributors avoid the occasional legal bitch-slap by removing offending



SYSTEM Shock 2: ownership rights in a tangle and no prospect of re-release – the ultimate abandonware poster child.



abandonia

FREE GAMES HERE!

Kosta Krauth on how his website became a big abandonware success story

Q **When did Abandonia first appear?**

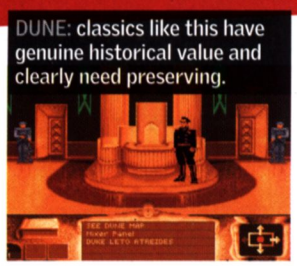
A "A long time ago... back in 1997. It remained rather small, and was not very well known until 2003 when I collected some money, paid for a decent hosting plan, joined various abandonware rings, opened up a forum and so on. Contributions of people involved in the scene really kicked it off. With their help, its growth rate exploded.

What have been some of your more popular downloads?

The most popular games over the years have been Microprose and Sid Meier strategies, such as the phenomenally popular *UFO* series, and Westwood's *Dune* series. But there are also some action-packed games that rate pretty high, like *Blood* or *Prince Of Persia*.

Had any positive feedback from developers and the like?

It would be inappropriate for any company or producer to openly support us, but we can say that many enjoy the site. The most contact we get is from freeware game makers that are interested in promoting their games through our site as we have a broad reach.



DUNE: classics like this have genuine historical value and clearly need preserving.

games whenever a publisher complains. Abandonia was recently raided by America's Entertainment Software Association (ESA) and ordered to remove 200 games, including ancient classics like *Wasteland* and *Budokan*.



FREESPACE: not for sale in shops.

Abandonia's Kosta Krauth complied within 24 hours, and "went one step further by getting in direct contact with ESA's representative and asking openly if he was satisfied with the changes." He remains good-natured about the experience: "I don't consider ESA to be the devil, as its job is to protect the interests of companies it represents. Most people don't look at it like this and call them various things."

would be up to the IP Holders to enforce any action as they see fit."

Mind you, prosecutions are rare and a greater risk is perhaps carried by the games themselves – some, from more disreputable sources, are more virus-addled than a Bangkok lady of the night, so it's wise to wear protection before downloading them.

Despite its controversial heritage, abandonware remains as popular as ever:

Abandonware: computer software that is no longer being sold or supported by its copyright holder

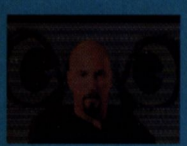
Good old ELSPA is forthright on the subject, with the view that if you play abandonware, you're breaking the law. "You should not download so-called abandonware unless you can be certain that the relevant copyright holders have given their express permission. Any form of penalty for people downloading and using abandonware is a civil matter... it gaming's history is preserved and you get to play stuff no longer in shops and at no expense. But for a few PC game gurus all this talk about the past is a fruitless exercise. "I don't really care about abandonware," deadpans *Scrapland* and *Alice* creator American McGee. "Old stuff is old stuff to me. I'd rather play with the new stuff." PCZ

Ten Abandoned Best

Game copyright is protected by law for 70 years, so even though you can't buy these games, downloading them is technically illegal and makes you a dirty, filthy criminal



1 System Shock 2
Home Of The Underdogs (www.the-underdogs.org)
Six years on and this sci-fi FPS continues to disturb and upset. When the cyborg midwives scream "Babies need fresh meat!", you'll promptly foul your underpants.



2 Command & Conquer Gold
Classic Gaming Archive (www.cgarchive.com)
The Brotherhood of Nod blows up a skyscraper in this C&C revamp from 1997. It's rumoured that Nod honcho Kane is currently checked into Hotel Guantanamo.



3 Dune
Abandonia (www.abandonia.com)
Strategy and adventure in a dirty big sandpit, complete with ecological crusty types and giant worms that eat your sandwiches. A bit like Brighton then.



4 Sid Meier's Civilization
BH Legend (www.bhlegend.com)
Build cities, develop technologies and military units, then conquer the world in a proud display of constructive deconstruction... or something.



5 Warcraft: Orcs & Humans
Classic Gaming Archive (www.cgarchive.com)
Two separate storylines and 12 scenarios are set aside for humans and their green-skinned cousins in 1994's RTS, a classic chapter in Blizzard's series.



6 Prince Of Persia
Abandonia (www.abandonia.com)
Swashbuckling 2D adventure set in a country renowned for its nice rugs. Save the princess from the evil Grand Vizier Jaffar, and make a mess of his pixelated furniture.



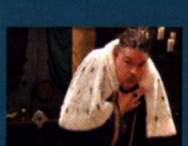
7 Freespace 2
Home of the Underdogs (www.the-underdogs.org)
For an infinite pit of nothingness, where no one can hear you scream and the food is nauseating, space makes a splendid location for this 3D operatic combat.



8 Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar
Abandoneer (www.abandoneer.com)
No backstabbing, theft or general nastiness in Ultima's righteous RPG. Instead, you must uphold "eight virtues" to win, which also means no downloading abandonware.



9 The Settlers 2
Game Collection (www.gamecollect.net)
Command the Roman Army in this classic RTS: steal the Viking's dinner money and give the Asiatics a wedgie they'll never forget behind the bike sheds.



10 The Horde
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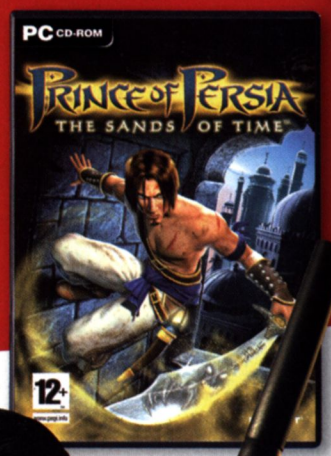
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STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



Steve Hill fights the *Guild Wars*, again...

ONCE, TWICE, THREE times a lady. Or maybe not. Back in the magical soft-focus world of *Guild Wars* for the third time, I'm faced with a difficult decision. Shall I be Steve Hill or shall I be Fanny Batter? Through some kind of digital suspended animation, my two previous characters are waiting patiently for me. Young Fanny Batter, the Sapphic temptress, is the obvious option, but I'm in for the long haul this time and the prospect of being bothered by bearded men for the foreseeable future is less than appealing.

Steve Hill it is then, a noble ranger with flowing locks and an inexplicable face mask. Besides, by using my own name there's a slim chance that a regular reader might recognise me and give me money or cake. In fact, everyone should use their real names – forget this role-playing lark, it could be like some kind of Trolls Reunited service. You could discover that the fat kid at school is now eking out a living selling dye to cloth-makers, or that the girl you fancied is part of a guild of mythical warriors.

SCARY MONSTERS

Either way, it seems they have been expecting me. No sooner have I stepped back into the breach than Sir Tydus is hailing me. "I've been looking for you everywhere, Steve Hill," he lies, before inviting me to visit Lakeside (sadly not the darts venue), where Artemis The Ranger awaits. According to Tydus: "She can show you a trick or two." This is a tempting enough offer on a good day, let alone after being locked up with a lesbian for six months, and I instantly agree.

Such is my haste that I forget to ask where Lakeside is (not Essex). Stumbling aimlessly around the lush countryside, I encounter a small girl called Gwen, who pleads: "I left my flute by the river, but there are lots of scary monsters there now."

What am I, a charity? I'm about to tell her where to get off when I spot Artemis The Ranger stood directly behind her. Swiftly agreeing to get Gwen's godforsaken flute, I stroll over to the buxom Artemis and eagerly introduce myself. As helpful as she is beautiful, she shows me how to use a bow and arrow, explaining enigmatically: "Yes, it's good to be a ranger."

Using my new-found skills to dispatch the monsters and retrieve Gwen's flute, I'm considerably less than pleased to discover that it's broken. Testing my patience, she then hints: "My daddy was an adventurer like you. Once, he let me go on an adventure with him." OK, OK, just don't call me daddy...

FOOLS GOLD

Randomly slaughtering the wildlife, it seems this green and pleasant land is rich in every sense. Club a giant lobster to death with a lump-hammer and it gives up four gold coins. One even drops a sword, which I use to joylessly butcher an oversized chicken. I'm pretty handy with my weapons, but stupidly I get talking to a ruthless charlatan who convinces me to swap my fighting skills for an array of spurious spells. She might as well have sold me some magic beans, and the ineffectiveness of my nascent wizardry is driven home when I take on a wild bull and am brutally gored.

Opting for a less physical task, I agree to help a guard find his missing friend. This requires one person to hold a lever while the other goes through a gate. Thinking I finally have a use for the kid, I order her to hold it, but with my temples throbbing with rage, she roundly ignores me and continues to skip around like a child.

PET SOUNDS

Abandoning her in favour of adult company, I get talking to a woman who's effectively a matchmaker, offering me a reward in return for finding a mate. Heading for the busier part of town, it's like a speed dating service, and I somehow convince the leather-clad Punkeymunkey to join me. She even invites me to help her search for the Moa Bird, which as first dates go is certainly more original than the local multiplex.

We look great together, but as ever there's a catch, in that she's followed every step of the way by a filthy stinking pet. Not quite as bad as the perennial yappy dog, it appears to be some kind of big cat, and I feign interest by asking its name. "Melandru," replies Punkeymunkey, but she can already tell that I hate it.

We never do find the Moa Bird, and she takes me to a dingy place called The Catacombs. "Do you want to try another quest?" she moodily asks, but I'm not listening. By the time I reply, she's gone and I'm left alone in the dark, physically and metaphorically. Ranger, good sense of humour, seeks similar for adventure. PCZ





This is a tempting offer on a good day, never mind after being locked up with a lesbian for six months...




GIVE me an X-Wing any day.



SPECIAL EDITION

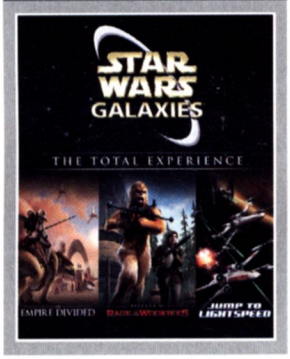
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- Exclusive in-game BARC speeder bike



FOR MANY A dedicated Rebel soldier or Imperial Stormtrooper, the 'total' *Star Wars Galaxies* experience went something like this...

Game bought in a flurry of sweaty anticipation the day after release. Game installed an hour later once heart rate had calmed to a level suitable for conscious thought. Game subscription paid for once credit card not maxed out on pizza deliveries located.

Game started three hours later once first of many patches downloaded. Two-hour break to recover from fainting when *Star Wars* logo and fanfare blare out from monitor. Wookiee character rolled up. Twenty minutes of messing around with the random name generator before finally settling on original choice of Flewbacca. Tutorial played. Another fainting break once Mos Eisley loads up. Several months of dedicated skill grinding coupled with a growing sense that this isn't actually the all-encompassing *Star Wars* online experience dreamt about. (For a start there's no space travel. Or lightsabers.) Continual depression at the lack of *Star Wars*-ness and the ever-deepening grind. Unremitting joy half a year later at the release of the *Jump To Lightspeed* add-on, finally bringing space travel and combat to the universe.

Unremitting exasperation as *JTL* turns out to be an unfocused experience. A few more months of grinding and debate about subscription cancellation. A sense of relief when the *Combat Upgrade* is announced with its stated goal of bringing the game's action closer to the 'true' experience of *Star Wars* rather than the current experience of being *EverQuest* in *Star Wars* clothing. Blind rage when the *Combat Upgrade* is finally released ahead of the rushed *Rage Of The Wookiees Episode III* tie-in and turns the game even further into *EverQuest* in *Star Wars* clothing and is a buggy mess with little thought for the needs of the players. Final cancellation of subscription and eventual realisation that you could have been playing proper games all along.

SHOOT FIRST

Throughout its existence we maintained that the only thing really wrong with *Star Wars Galaxies* was its association with *Star Wars*. Had this been a generic, non-franchised sci-fi MMO title, SOE would have had a very decent little game on its hands. But *Star Wars* fans being what they are (dedicated), there was no way *SWG* could ever be the ultimate experience they were looking for. For a start, the *Star Wars* 'galaxy' was one of

Planet-hopping

Package holidays will never be the same again as we take a whistle-stop tour of the galaxy...



TATOOINE: Look! It's the escape pod used by R2-D2 and C-3PO. You'd think they would have shifted it by now.



NABOO: Next stop, a gay Jamaican fish-man festival. Too much Gungan ganja for this one though.



CORELLIA: Bumped into a Jedi. Nice chap, but prone to accidental discharge. Lucky I'm made of rubber.



SPACE: Cheese it! It's the fuzz! Maybe I should have paid for that travel ticket after all...



SEE what an extra wing can do?



I LOVE Ewoks. Couldn't eat a whole one, though...



ATTACK of the giant slinky.

thrilling stories, conflict and resolution, character growth and development, good versus evil. A beginning, a middle and an end. It was not watching progress bars slowly grow following repetitive actions and abstracted combat. People had spoken for years about the tantalising concept of an online *Star Wars* game, but what no one had realised was that they'd meant playing X-Wing vs TIE Fighter with a group of mates, not playing *EverQuest* in Naboo.

The great cancellation rush of early 2005 has thinned the herd of whining obsessives and left the game feeling somewhat more relaxed, filled with players who are there for the sheer love of the game and don't mind the loose interpretation of the *Star Wars* canon. Many of the *Combat Upgrade's* bugs have been ironed out and the resulting system isn't quite as bad as people have made out. Sure, it's no *Dark Forces II* in terms of edge of your seat action, but as MMOs go, it's competent enough and still has one of the better skill systems out there.

> **"The only thing wrong with *SWG* is its association with *Star Wars*"**

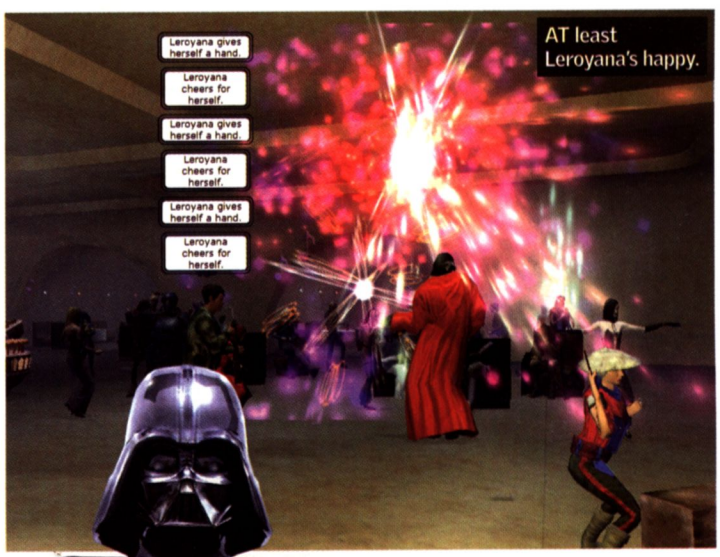
For most, the *Combat Upgrade* was the final straw. Badly handled on SOE's part, the 'like it or lump it' mentality drove away a fair proportion of the already dwindling audience, disillusioned with the lack of direction in the game. Many saw their characters made worthless. Jedi particularly suffered after already having jumped through many tiresome and ill-defined hoops to unlock their Force powers. The bitterest pill of all was when the *Combat Upgrade* redefined the requirements needed to be a Jedi and many existing Padawan were dumped back to the ranks of mere mortals.

STAR WARS TODAY

All of which paints rather a negative picture of what could have been a half decent MMO. But where is *SWG* today? Actually, things aren't so bad any more.

Perhaps the best way to experience the universe is as a newbie, in which case *The Total Experience* package is your only choice. Not only does it reduce the horrendous amount of patching you'd have to sit through, but you get a bonus *Episode III* speeder bike.

Ultimately, *SWG* is a flawed attempt to create the game of many a fanboy's dreams. However, overlook the franchise implementation and you might just enjoy yourself. After all, you can't ruin things any more than George Lucas already has. PCZ



AT least Leroyana's happy.



THE RAVAGES OF TIME

STAR WARS GALAXIES	1st
PLANETSIDE	2nd
ANARCHY ONLINE	3rd

The MMOG world hasn't been over-blessed with sci-fi spectaculars, but *Star Wars Galaxies* still rates as the best of a dwindling bunch. For a decent gaming experience you're still better off with something in a fantasy flavour – like *World Of Warcraft* or *Guild Wars*.

SUPERTEST

SQUAD-BASED SHOOTERS

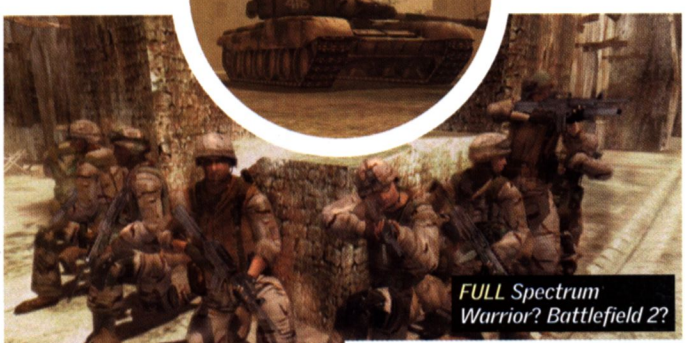
CD & DVD



It's back! No scripts, no rehearsals, just five games, four players and a couple of microphones. New-style mag, new-style Supertest...



WHICH squad-shooter is best?



FULL Spectrum Warrior? Battlefield 2?

PODCASTING! IT'S THE future, apparently. Blogs = tired. Audio Blogging = wired (for sound). Yes, due to popular demand (we had a letter) the sleeping gin-soaked tramp that was the *PC ZONE* Supertest has been prodded with a sharpened stick, hosed down with an industrial water cannon, and scrubbed into shape by the finest minds since Kim and Aggie.

The first thing you'll notice is that there doesn't appear to be any sort of transcript on this page. The second thing you'll notice is that it's just a single, solitary page. "Bwah huh?" you're probably thinking, adding "Gnhhhh!" for good measure. Fear not, simpleton, everything is in order.

This month (and, indeed, every month from now on), you'll find the Supertest hiding out on our shiny cover discs in its spanking new audio-only format! Yep, gone are the days of "(Everybody laughs)" and "(Will looks crestfallen)". They've been replaced with our actual voices! Yes, Will really does sound like that! That's right, Jamie really is from 'oop north!

Simply click on the Supertest button in the Freeplay section of the disc and you'll be able to sit back and enjoy 20 fun-packed minutes in the company of Will, Prez, Suzy and Jamie as they argue the merits of which squad-based shooter reigns supreme: *Battlefield 2*, *SWAT 4*, *Joint Ops*, *Close Combat: First To Fight* or *Full Spectrum Warrior*?

Better yet, copy the file from our disc to your hardened drive and you can pop it on your iPod Mini (or whatever) and you can have the *ZONE* crew talk to you everywhere you go. Listen to Suzy recount her *BF1942* experiences while pruning the garden. Hear Jamie talk about *SWAT* grenade tactics while you go for a jog. And enjoy Will describing *Full Spectrum Warrior* as Sudoku with guns while soaping yourself in the shower. Then, once you're incensed enough by our inanity, have your own say by emailing supertest@pczone.co.uk (Subject line: Supertest). Each month we'll print the best comments received. You'll also be able to head to our forums each month at www.pczone.co.uk and take part in our exclusive readers' poll to find out what you think is the best of the bunch.

Yes, Will really does sound like that! That's right, Jamie really is from 'oop north!



Yes, it's a brave new world and we're all on board for the ride. So strap yourself in, listen to us have our say, then come and have yours. You wouldn't want to be left behind after all. PCZ



YES, it's a kitchen. Next month, *ZONE* in the bathroom.

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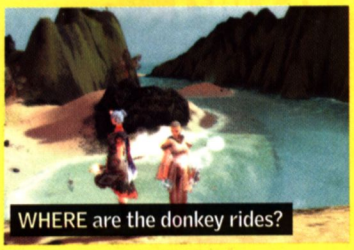
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DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

GUILD WARS

What does it take to turn great ideas into reality? We reveal all with our look at the inner workings of a developer's mind


WHERE are the donkey rides?

EVER WONDERED WHAT the brains behind your favourite games were thinking during the creation process? Each month we sit down with a top developer and pick over the bones of their opus. This month: Jeff Strain, founder of ArenaNet and director of the most popular online RPG for years...



01 DESIGN IDEAS: "When we sat down to design *Guild Wars*, our thinking was that MMOs have fantastic technology and design ideas, but they've been stuck in a rut for eight years. We sat down and analysed every component of online RPGs that we thought kept them targeted to a fairly hardcore audience and, of course, that spanned everything from the traditional problems of spawn-camping and loot-stealing to subscription-fees. We decided that even though we were going to be bucking convention, we wanted to design a game that was truly unique and that addressed these issues directly. The challenge was making sure that people understood what we were trying to do and that this was not just another MMO."



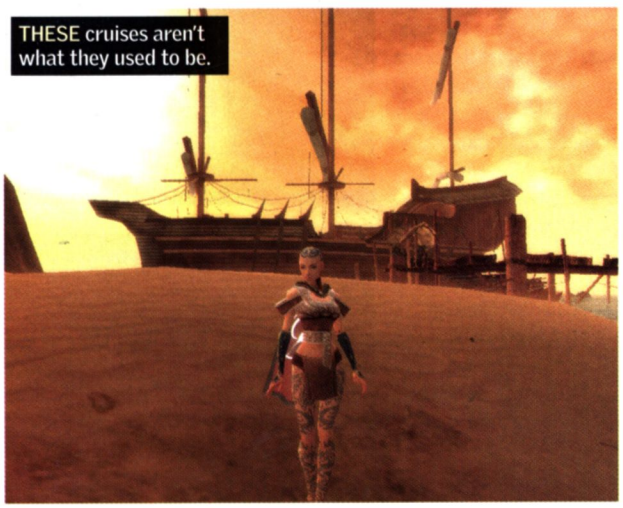
02 MMO TRADITIONS: "Our goal wasn't to do something different, our goal was to do something better. It's a subtle distinction, but one that's important to us because I think you can fall into a trap, as a game designer, of saying: 'look, we just want to be different from MMOs and every time we see something that's like an MMO we should change it'. Frankly there are some elements of MMOs that really work well. Being able to rub elbows with hundreds or thousands of other players in the same area and do silly things like dance in groups and preen and show off your armour, I mean that's cool stuff. We didn't want to lose that aspect. Our goal was to take those fun elements, but solve a lot of the problems that turned a lot of people away. We also wanted to bring in some elements that make strategy games and first-person shooters fun, and try to bring that into the mix to make something that really has the best of all of them."



WHICH part of die don't you understand?



03 **SELLING THE GAME:** "Our biggest challenge at first was avoiding the MMO image, even beyond all our development challenges. Really getting people to understand that this was not an MMO. It has some MMO elements, but it's not designed to be what you think of when you think of an MMO. That's why we did things like the world preview events and the beta weekend events. We finally realised that the best way to really let people know what the game is about is to let them play it."



THESE cruises aren't what they used to be.

We realised that what each culture considers to be heroic is very different



04 **PRE-SEARING ASCALON:** "Interestingly, the game initially did not have the pre-Searing world. Initially, you got right into the action, but what we were finding was that we weren't really nailing that emotional attachment and the sense of loss that we wanted people to experience. Also, the game had a rather traditional tutorial where you'd go and do a mission, and it would teach you how to play the game. So what we did was take a step back and say what we really wanted was to find a way to make people fall in love with the world. The pre-Searing world was the last region we created, around the beginning of this year. Our team had become very proficient at creating new parts of the world so I think they enjoyed the opportunity to re-envision what the place looked like before it was destroyed. It just fitted in naturally to the development system we had."



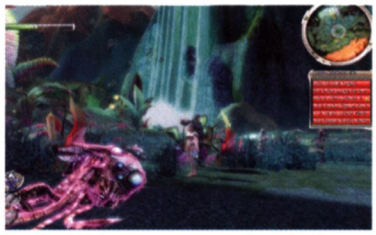
05 **GLOBAL GAMING:** "We're releasing in Asia throughout this year and next. We'll be releasing in Japan and Taiwan and we have plans for China as well. As we continue to release additional content into the live version of the game and also new chapters, we'll really start to explore lots of cultural zones. Early on in development we sent some of our character designs to our Asian teams for analysis. For the warrior, in particular, they sent it back with a note on it saying 'American redneck'. He was a big, beefy Conan type, and we realised that what each culture considers to be heroic is very different, so we really had to work on that."

We wanted to make sure that *Guild Wars* was a skill game and not a time game


NICE spot for a sandcastle.

06 **SKILFUL GAMING:** "The skill system was the very core of the game. One of the things that we think turns a lot of people off traditional MMOs is the enormous time investment, which is required – not available, but required – in order for you to get to the fun stuff. From day one we wanted to make a game that was a skill game and not a time game. If you're a better gamer, think strategically and make good decisions then you'll do better than the kid down the street who has 80 hours a week to play games. I think that the very first part of it was to design that skill system, design that combat system and make sure, through extreme trials, that we really were living up to that promise of making a game that rewarded your player skills."

07 **POST-RELEASE TWEAKING:** "One issue we ran into was that we found our pre-order items – if you pre-ordered the game in Europe or the US, you got a special item –were designed long before the pre-order programmes began and, because they wouldn't become available until the game actually shipped, we didn't really put those through the same vigorous testing as the other items in the game. We realised that we had designed these a year ago and that they were just far too powerful. So, a day after we shipped, we had to tune that back. Luckily, we didn't hear much of an outcry, but we've been very careful and also fortunate that we haven't had to go nerfing [making wholesale changes to classes] in the game to a large degree. We did our time in the barrel up front and made good design decisions. Not to say that we'll never slip up, but so far we've had a pretty good ride."




FEELS good to blow off some steam.

08 **SUBSCRIPTION-FREE GAMING:** "Looking at our sales and the number of people playing, the no-subscription thing is working out well for us. From the beginning, our goal with the no-subscription fees was to bring online role-playing games to a broader audience than traditional subscription-based role playing games could normally attract. I think now we're really seeing that people are trying *Guild Wars* – even people who don't usually play online role-playing games – because there's not this huge requirement for them to subscribe to it. We're exceptionally pleased with the reception and now our goal is to start releasing new chapters and really make sure that we keep the content pipeline going."



HAVEN'T got a ghost of a chance.



I can see my house from here.

09 **BALANCING AND PLAYTESTING:** "It took a long time to test all the skills in the game. There are 450 of them and they all have to be balanced. It really is walking the line between maths and magic. You have to have a formal mathematic foundation to your skill system so that there's some structure that you can actually manipulate to tell yourself that it's balanced. But on the other side of it, there are just raw hours of play with skilful players and then the intuition of a very skilful game designer. We were very fortunate to have James Finney who was the lead designer of *StarCraft* working with us. He was the one who did all the balancing for the three races in *StarCraft* so he knew how to approach that kind of problem. All the skills were in and implemented at least a year before we shipped, which helped. From the very beginning, we knew exactly how many there were going to be per profession and there was no way anybody was adding skill to the game at that point!"



SAME old commute to the *ZONE* offices.

11 **PLAYER VS PLAYER:** "PvP was the best way to determine whether skills are balanced and the combat system is fun. Just have people get in there and go at it. If you have to bring monster AI into the picture then that's something you have to develop as well. So if you're playing co-operatively in the early stages of the game and you're able to defeat the monsters within 20 seconds, or if they can always kick your butt in 20 seconds then it's not really clear if your skill system is unbalanced or your AI isn't good enough. So, to remove the variables from the equation and really drill down on getting that skill system balanced, we did PvP first."



10 **THE PLAYERS:** "The holy grail for us is seeing how players use our skills in ways that we didn't expect. The strategies that evolve continually amaze us. During the world preview event in October, I had some press and we were doing demos for them. In the beginning, we'd go into PvP and just mop up the players. But by the end of the weekend there was a Darwinian evolution of strategies that we had never considered or thought about. By the end, it was difficult to demo the game because we'd go into PvP and be dead within 20 seconds. That was, for us, one of the most exciting things – the emergent strategies of the game. After that we nerfed the hell out of everybody [laughs]. Not really."



HOW dare you manhandle my ostrich.

12 **LESSONS LEARNT:** "I think that if I were able to rewind history, a lot of refinements that we've made to the PvP experience – particularly in terms of how you acquire skills and the whole faction system that we rolled in – ideally could have been included when we released the game. But that's the kind of thing you can only really start seeing after watching thousands of people playing the game, hour after hour to determine what the trends are and how people want to play. Luckily, we're probably the most responsive development team on the planet. We have the technologies to quickly address issues and roll in new features. If you just look at the way we've changed the game and updated it based on player feedback since we shipped, I think that's really apparent. Of course, it would have been fun to have all that in from the beginning. Other than that, I think I speak for the entire development team when I say that we're all just walking on clouds right now." PCZ



RON GILBERT

***PC ZONE* enjoys a mug of grog with the legendary creator of *The Secret Of Monkey Island*...**

Why Do We Care?

The Secret Of Monkey Island! The game that topped our '50 Greatest PC Gaming Moments Ever!' feature in issue 153 was created by Gilbert, along with Tim Schafer (who most recently gave us the fantastic *Psychonauts*) and Dave Grossman. Gilbert was also the inventor of the SCUMM (Script Creation Utility for *Maniac Mansion*) system that popped up in other Lucas classics such as *Day Of The Tentacle*.

What's He Doing Now?

Gilbert has spent the last year looking for a publisher for his new project – a comedy RPG/RTS – but has now decided to self-publish with the help of private investors. He also spends time ranting against the evils of the games industry on www.grumpygamer.com, as well as meeting up at *Monkey Island* fan conventions around the world.



Remember This? RETURN TO MONKEY ISLAND



THE SCUMM Bar was a hive of villainy, where grog was drunk, plugs for *Loom* were made and dogs revealed salient plot points.



THREE pirates gave hero Guybrush Threepwood the three trials he faced to become a pirate: swordplay, thievery and treasure huntery.



MELEE Island's House of Mojo, where the Voodoo Lady appeared in a puff of smoke to help Guybrush with eerie tales and creepy voodoo stuff.



INSULT sword-fighting was *The Secret Of Monkey Island's* finest moment – verbal jousting with razor-sharp one-liners. Genius.

Q How did you come up with the idea for the SCUMM visual interface? Was it your frustration with adventure games up to that point?

A Firstly, I was a big fan of text adventures, but I didn't like typing or reading everything. For example, *King's Quest* was a graphical adventure game where you still had to type everything in. I thought: "This is crazy. I can see everything on the screen, why am I still typing?" So that was the light bulb in my head. When I sat down to do *Maniac Mansion* I vowed that it would be an adventure game with no typing – which is where the interface came about, moving the cursor over the screen to highlight things, for example.

***The Secret Of Monkey Island* was huge. Where did the idea come from?**

I wanted to do an adventure game but I didn't want to do fantasy – trolls, wizards and so on. So I thought – pirates! You've got the swordfighting, the same feel of fantasy and it's not set in modern-day. I also liked the Pirates Of The Caribbean ride at Disneyland and wanted to recreate that in a game. Plus there's a book, *On Stranger Tides* by Tim Powers, that mixes voodoo into its pirate story. You can see *Monkey Island* in that book!

***Monkey Island* was also just very funny. Most adventures around that time were very po-faced...**

Yeah, I probably couldn't do a game that wasn't humorous in some way. Having Tim Schafer and Dave Grossman on the project – which was just sheer luck – helped enormously, as they're fabulous writers. I had a miniature half-size pool table in my office and the three of us would play pool for hours, coming up with puzzles, working out the plot points and laughing ourselves silly. It was a lot of fun.

Can you remember coming up with the rubber-chicken-with-a-pulley-in-the-middle?

Some of it was too silly and too ridiculous, but others would stick. The chicken-with-a-pulley-in-the-middle was just an off-hand comment – we all laughed and moved on. Then later on we'd think, hey, that chicken with a pulley, that's kinda funny. So we'd go back and figure out how it'd work in game...

What about the 'stump gag' – where the game asks you to insert non-existent game disks?

That was something I put in. We were trying to think of things in the forest, which was kind of a maze – it was late and I wrote that stump gag and we all laughed. We debated it though, whether we should leave it in or not. We thought: "Ah, nobody's going to fall for this!" So we left it in and tech support soon started to get phone calls about it... I wasn't well-liked by them...



Where did you place the emphasis – on making the puzzles challenging or making the gags funny?

Definitely making the gags funny. With the puzzles, there was always a challenge to making them not too hard. You didn't want people frustrated – it was supposed to be fun after all. We'd do things like if you ask certain characters the same question more than five times, they'd give you a hint. Back then though, it was almost a requirement that games had 40 hours of gameplay – which is so different now. Today if you get ten hours, most publishers are happy.

Why is it that you don't see any funny games any more?

In the US, games are so serious – dark and violent – and what comes with that is this seriousness. They're trying to create this 'guy in trenchcoat' mood and you can't be funny with that. I think the whole art of being funny has been lost right now. It's kinda sad.

Did George Lucas ever pop his head around the door at LucasArts?

No, but Steven Spielberg did. Spielberg was a game fanatic, so every time he came up to the ranch to do business with George he was over at the games division, wanting to know what we were doing. He'd say: "Show me this! Show me that!" and grab the joystick away from us. He was great. And he played *Monkey Island* a lot.

Finally, would you make another *Monkey Island* game?

Oh yeah! I'd do it in a second if anybody would let me... PCZ

Ron Gilbert Likes...



STARBUCKS coffee (decaf Mocha with whipped cream).



INDIE films – stuff like *Napoleon Dynamite*.



FLYING – he's got a pilot's licence and until recently owned a plane.

Spielberg was great – he'd come in and grab the joystick. He played *Monkey Island* a lot

Ron Gilbert, *clever bloke behind The Secret Of Monkey Island*

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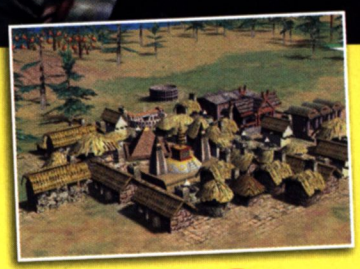
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THE NEW-LOOK PC ZONE ON SALE 15 SEPTEMBER

DOMINIK DIAMOND

I've adored this magazine since it began, have laughed heartily at its insides and am proud to join writers like Brooker, Porter and even Hill. The fee and new Alienware PC are incidental...

My first thought is it's a suspiciously small box. Still. Never put me off Paris Hilton...

TRANSFERRING TO A NEW PC is the modern equivalent of running away from the potato famine in Ireland for a new life in America. You've got to do it for the good of your family but you know the journey's going to be full of boll weevils and syphilis.

My gerbil-sized Sony VAIO is perfect for gadding betwixt Glasgow and London jotting down gags for Channel 4's *100 Greatest Gay Cop Sci-Fi Comedies*, but rubbish for games any more technically advanced than *Hungry Horace*. So I've been given an Alienware – the ultimate gaming machine ©. Three weeks ago it arrived and I'm still terrified to even open it. Because techno-wise I am an arse. An impatient buffoon. A twat.

Finally I gird my loins. Clear a day in my diary. And get started.

10.00 First thought: it's a suspiciously small box. Still. That never put me off Paris Hilton.

10.45 Find cool leather-effect ringbinder of instructions. The first page has complicated things like IRQ configurations listed so I toss it aside.

11.10 Logitech professional keyboard! In black! With one of those things you clip on the bottom to prevent RSI. I think you're supposed to rest your non-wanking hand on it while you surf the Net.

11.35 Come across an A8N-SLI motherboard setting diagram. Start weeping. I only want to play *Doom 3* – not colonise Mars.

12.15 Holy Mother of Shit! There's a bag in there full of leads. Small red ones. With nowt but numbers stamped on them. One reads 14-0000107071. It think that's the number of hours it will take me to work out what the f*** they're all for.

13.00 Worry that I may have to build this computer from scratch. Shit! I don't even own a soldering iron and they've stopped selling them round our way because the kids use them as weapons.

14.00 Spend an hour trying to work out what a two-pence-piece-shaped bit of cardboard does. Finally realise that it's just a two-pence-piece-shaped bit of cardboard.

14.30 Wish I could click my fingers and have Yoda appear to help. Or the shopkeeper from *Mr Benn*.

14.35 Open the main box. It contains the kind of cushion-packing normally used to transport Nuclear Warheads. I sell it to the council to use as a municipal bouncy castle for the local kids. No hard shoes or soldering irons allowed.

14.45 I have visual confirmation of the PC! Repeat, I have visual confirmation of the PC! Have no idea how to lift it out. Feel I should really have Jack Bauer from CTU on hand. Go for a poo to collect my thoughts.

15.00 While pooing I leaf through a couple of old copies of *PC ZONE* to use Steve Hill as a benchmark for swearing in columns. Buoyed by the fact that within two NeverQuests he'd used shitmonger, spunkbubble, cock, piss, shit, dick, tit, twats, arse, piss-stained, titf***er and c***yboobies. I'm probably all right.

15.05 Realise just how attractive Suzy Wallace is. Turn into Paul Danan for 3.7 seconds then punch myself hard in the penis with the revulsion that brings on.

15.10 Return to office and gingerly remove PC using a winch and a local Cub Scout troop.

15.25 Mrs D walks in and coos at the keyboard: "Ooh look, there's a button that says email!" she coos. "That means you can send email with one button. That's brilliant!"

16.00 OK. That's everything out of the box. Now where's the monitor?

16.15 There's no monitor.

16.30 Maybe the two-pence-piece-shaped cardboard disk was a monitor.

17.00 Realise I have done my first column without even switching a computer on, let alone play a game. This could run for years... PCZ



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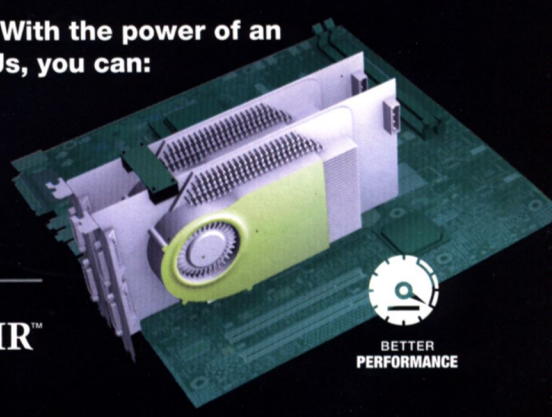
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